CAVIARE

GRANT RICHARDS

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CAVIARE

A WILD ROSE IN A HOTHOUSE

CAVIARE

BY

GRANT RICHARDS

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TO

MRS. CHARLES BEDDINGTON

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BOOK I

PARIS AND A RAID

CAVIARE

CHAPTER I

VERY SHORT; THE AMIABLE CHARLES IS INTRODUCED

THERE are people who like Paris even in the winter. The Amiable Charles — nearly everyone knew him as "the Amiable Charles," although his letters were addressed to "The Hon. Charles Caerleon" — was not one of them. It is true he preferred it to London, but that was not saying much. London he hated nearly all the time — disliked its muddiness, its pallid sun, its fog. Perhaps — he was not quite sure — it was bearable in October for a week: anyhow it had its uses then; but it was only pleasant for two days — one could never tell which the days would be, unfortunately — in April, and, intermittently, during May and June. And the worst of it was that Paris, which he loved for many months in every year, was at its best in May and June too. In those nine weeks his was a very divided allegiance. He would be in London for the Derby, and in Paris for the Grand Prix; then there were certain performances at the Opera — in London, of course — which he could not miss; but he would have to run back to the Place Vendôme for some function, and then again to London because the *œufs de pluvier* were always inferior on the banks of the Seine. Really he should have had a season ticket.

To-day, February 9, 1912, the Amiable Charles was in a state of mind that belied the epithet which the affection, the observation of his world had bestowed upon him. For him, he was in a rage. Things had been going badly for quite a long time. You cannot be amiable, not really amiable, without a well-lined pocket and a snug balance at your bank; and you cannot, unless you are either a worker or a millionaire, gain and keep the reputation of being amiable without in the long run getting an unpleasant reminder of the transitory nature of worldly possessions. Messrs. Coutts had sent him such a reminder, and its presence in his pocket "did n't help matters any," as they say in the States — not that I should quote the language of that imperfectly civilised country in dealing with Charles Caerleon, since if there was one country the very idea of which he abominated it was New York. You must not protest that New York is not a country. What I am trying to do is to reproduce his habit of mind: it was characteristic of him to think of America as New York and of New York as America.

Charles was on his way South. To be exact, he was on his way to Monte Carlo. For ten years it had been his habit to go to Monte Carlo in the first week of every February, and to stop in Monte Carlo until the emptiness of hotel and restaurant told him more plainly even than the calendar that Paris and London were thinking again of their own beauties. But this was the first year in which he had had to subject his person to the discomfort of approaching Monte Carlo from the cold North. His habit was to encounter winter in the farther South, — in Sicily, in Algiers, in Egypt, — and then early in

January slowly to wend his way back to the white tables and the green, to the little town where he could sate his two cold passions — his passion for romance, the romance of which for him the symbols were the next season's hats and frocks, the fall of the cards, the roll of the ball; and his passion for the table, the white table, the white table where he would sit by the hour and discuss wines and salads and dishes with famous *maîtres d'hôtel*, and where sometimes — just often enough — he would capture the rare feeling that he was not living in vain.

CHAPTER II

FOOTPAD GALLANTRY

AND being on his way South, the Amiable Charles had thought it necessary to stop for a few hours in Paris. Much as a woman might stop to buy hats — and in the same place, the Rue de la Paix — Charles Caerleon stopped to buy — shirts. Just as he held that plovers' eggs and coats and the opera were best to be had in London, so he held that the most attractive, the most comfortable shirts were to be obtained in Paris. And, being a person who had no reason to consider any other taste than his own, — I had forgotten to tell you, although surely I had implied, that the Amiable Charles was unmarried, — the hosiers of Bond Street wooed his custom in vain, and regularly twice a year he would spend a couple of hours at a certain corner shop —

But Charles was not to visit the haven of his taste uninterrupted. He had left, I must tell you, his luggage at the Gare du Nord with his man, who was to meet him again later in the evening at the Gare de Lyon, first leaving a suit-case for his master at the Chatham, where Charles proposed to dress; after that he would dine (but not at his hotel — oh, no!) [1] and then rejoin luggage

[1] Someone or other may suggest that this parenthesis rather dates my book. Nowadays the Chatham has quite a good restaurant as part of its attractions — or, counting its grill-room, a restaurant and a half. But I shall let the sentence stand. You see, to stop in a hotel and to

and man at the Lyons terminus. Now it was late in the afternoon, the night drawing in, and he was wondering whether he could properly order shirts in the electric light, consoling himself the while with the thought that, after all, even should he stop till to-morrow, Paris might wear one of those fogs which with her are becoming almost as common as in London.

He had had an *apéritif* outside the Café de la Paix — a vulgar custom and not a select place, but the corner of the Place de l'Opéra was a habit with Charles, a habit going back to his Eton days, when its very raffishness had appealed to him — and now sauntered down the street, looking first to the right and then to the left, wondering vaguely where he should dine and what he should dine on, more complacently now that for the moment he had forgotten Messrs. Coutts's polite letter, a little troubled, perhaps, — at the back of his mind, — as to whether his coat showed signs of his journey, but on the whole satisfied with himself and with his world. At least he would enjoy these evening hours even though they were to be followed by the stuffy agonies of a packed *wagon-lit*, and, later, possibly to-morrow, an earnest consideration of a financial position which it was never happy nor convenient to consider. The thought of money came back to him thus, but he repelled it, repelled it characteristically with the sudden memory that at the Café des Trois Vertus — yes, he would dine there — was a certain claret —

dine out of it — well, that 's a habit of life, of mind: it betrays. It was Charles's way of seeking adventure — only culinary adventure, perhaps, but still there was always a possibility of a new experience.

! ! . . . . ? "*I* beg your pardon, sir, I am very sorry. It was my fault entirely."

It was Charles's pardon which was being begged — and well it might be. A large American — oh! obviously an American — large in every way, large in his clothes, large in his double chin, pink-faced and glowing, white-haired but with a vigour of action and appearance which belied the white hair, turning to look appreciatively at the lines and provocative carriage of a modiste whom a *porte cochère* had just given to his view, had walked into our hero, walked sideways into him, and had as nearly knocked him down as would be seemly at so fashionable an hour in so fashionable a thoroughfare. Had he been entirely felled, Charles's equanimity would hardly have recovered. Fortunately, his hat alone had touched the ground, and had suffered little. It was handed him at once by a prompt and sympathetic porter, so that he could afford to smile at the stranger and put him at his ease with an assurance that no harm had been done. The encounter was at an end: the American passed on, more discreet in his gait, and Charles continued his stroll, considering vanity. Gallantry and white hair went ill together, he thought. . . . But then, fortunately placed himself, with the health of thirty-three well-cared-for years, always attractive and nearly always successful, Charles had little tolerance for, no sympathy with, footpad gallantry.

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH A GOOD DINNER IS ORDERED AND EATEN

CHARLES, bound as he thought by the necessity of catching the train to the South, arrived betimes at the restaurant he had chosen. As the door revolved and he reached its warm and smiling interior, two *maîtres d'hôtel*, recognising him with a flush that might pass for pleasure, came forward competing for his custom. Charles always treated waiters well. It was his policy. They always, in consequence, remembered him — remembered him in the least likely places. Once he had attended, at the request of his sister-in-law, a missionary reception where a cold collation was to be provided for the delegates from Balham, Darlington, and the other sources of missionary effort. Charles, protesting, was ordered to eat as an encouragement to the others — and to his surprise he ate well: he was being looked after, he afterwards discovered, by a waiter who had served him in Rome. Once even he had secured a good meal at a Liverpool railway hotel because the *maître d'hôtel* knew his taste from an acquaintance begun at Monte Carlo and continued in Paris.

The Café des Trois Vertus is divided in two. One enters at the apex of a triangle: one side is for the world, the other for the half world — or so it is said. One need not ask which side is the most *chic*, the most desired. Generally Charles, either to avoid his compatriots, or to

feed his romantic liking for large hats and pretty gowns, chose the right. Had he done so to-day this romance would never have been written — or it would have had an entirely different plot. He chose the left on this evening for two reasons: that being in a hurry, or what for him, who never hastened, was a hurry, he felt that all his attention must be given to plate and glass, and that he had a slight preference for its head waiter, the impeccable Claude. And so, surrendering his coat and hat to the brisk, black-garbed young lady of the cloak-room, he sat himself near the door, and, glancing round the still empty restaurant, turned to the *carte* and the choice of his dinner.

Shall I bore you if I tell you what he ordered? Six *marennes vertes*, *potage Jubilee* (which he liked for its delicate liaison of pea soup and *consommé*), *sole Walewska*, *tournedos Rossini*, a quail *en chemise*, an artichoke, and coffee. It was a meal of no particular distinction, but Claude took the order as if its choice had really impressed him. So the successful *maître d'hôtel* makes himself!

Then the *sommelier*: "*Monsieur désire le même vin?*"

"*Oui*, August," — and August knew that if the Haut Brion came well to the table there would be a special two francs for his own pocket.

The meal proceeded with leisurely order. Charles's one eye watched the revolving door, to recognise here and there an acquaintance of last year, or to judge of the success of next season's fashions; the other watched the clock. He need not hurry — there would be time and to spare for a *fine de la maison* and a cigar.

And it was this uninspiring moment that Fate chose for the introduction into Charles's life of the flush of real romance. To him, sunk for the time in material joys, caring nothing for the spirit, appears the heroine of this story.

CHAPTER IV

THE HEROINE APPEARS

MY chapters are — I know it — very short, but on that fateful evening Charles's moods were short, his movements a little hastened, the wheels turned swiftly. There was time, he thought, for contemplation. Little he knew. And little at the moment — or at any moment, for the matter of that — did he reck of the future.

Once more the door revolved. Charles looked up. A coincidence. Here was his American of the afternoon, still pink, still vigorous, dressed for the evening with that florid good taste that Fifth Avenue demands. He was followed by a lady, and Charles turned his head an eighth of an inch to see of what stuff she might be made. Few damsels came Charles's way without being subjects of that careful, appraising, yet not disrespectful scrutiny. Few resented it — least of all when the glance was continued or repeated. Charles in his own turn would think always that his gaze was unobserved — but, is n't it true that for such matters women have eyes at the back of their heads?

The American's companion was a lady. That took Charles but a second to decide. And in the same second he knew that she was pretty — yes, very pretty. Later he came to know that she was beautiful, lovely — but these were qualities that he had learned to attribute

slowly. Women are deceptive. For the moment he satisfied himself with thinking that she was young, perhaps twenty-two, that she was good, and that she was pretty.

I will attempt to describe her to you — if for no other reason than because it will prove to you that I who write am no woman masquerading under masculine pseudonym. A small head set well on shoulders that uncovered for the evening would surely be slim, graceful, and finely drawn. Hair of a darkish brown, caught up too loosely to be fashionable, a little wayward, perhaps, ample, rippling naturally (Charles thought) under the broad brim of a hat whose one black feather betrayed no transatlantic origin. Her figure, taller than the average, was slender, with waist hinted at rather than expressed under dress of white lace — a dress cut to the moment of fashion but lacking those provocative, insistent graces that mark the costume of the young Parisienne who frequents the modish restaurant: in other words, it had been made for a lady. From her neck hung a string of pearls — superb pearls, Charles said to himself at once — to where white roses lay beneath her bosom. I must content myself with adding that her little feet were shod with white, and that white gloves could not hide the smallness of her hands nor their long grace.

And now her face. Charles, who realised at once that she, too, was an American, congratulated himself — in after years he never could make up his mind why his thoughts had taken so instantly that form — that it was neither unduly yellow — so many American faces are yellow to sallowness — nor unduly blowsy. Blue eyes, whose lurking laughter corrected a rather serious fore-

head, looked out from under lashes whose length and regularity would have made the reputation of a far more modest beauty. Her skin looked firm and soft and fine, and where it curved out over her cheek-bones its colour was of a rose-pink, transparent — exquisite was Charles's word. And there to the best of my poor masculine ability you have my heroine, Celia Alison Gorham.

The American recognised Charles and flushed, bowing slightly. A table had been kept for him on the other side from where Charles sat, so that as he smoked and sipped his coffee he could watch the pair, wonder who they were, and continue to admire the soft, appealing beauty of the young girl, who seemed, he could not help thinking, a little out of place in these surroundings, a little as if a wild rose had strayed by some accident into a hothouse.

Let me pause to explain. Charles's character had many sides, apparently contradictory sides. It chanced, now and then, that one knowing this side of him or that would swear some other had no existence save in the imagination of the critic. It was not that he was profound. Far from it. He was simple. But because he was not profound, because he was simple and, harmlessly, selfish, and because most of the time he was absorbed in his own affairs, and the affairs of his not very important friends, and his own clothes, and his own sensations, and his own intellectual interests — the order is intentional — because, in fact, he was himself and not another — because of all this his separate friends came

near to quarrelling about the manner of man he was. He was in truth the man that his education, the tastes of his first mentors, and his patrimony, modest and yet sufficient, — sufficient had he only been a little more discreet, — had made him. No, not very satisfactory — except to his intimates, to whom he was loyal, and to himself, to whom he seldom caused disquiet, his conscience being asleep as yet, and his digestion being, as far as he knew, non-existent. For the rest, he was "good-looking" in the best English way; healthy-looking, too, with more than a hint of pink in his cheeks, and with clear, candid eyes. Good food and good wine — partaken neither of them in too prodigal a fashion — do little harm to the candid young — and Charles still reckoned himself young, still cared to walk and to swim, and was still able to sleep o' nights.

And as he sat in the Café des Trois Vertus his mind wandered this way and that, sensuously rather than happily, pleased rather than glad, satisfied rather than joyful. He thought at one moment of the dark murk of the London he had that morning left, of the depression that the drawing of the winter curtains morning after morning in his flat in Mount Street brought to him, and at the next, by contrast, of what he expected to find when he pushed aside the curtain of his sleeping compartment on the next morning under the Esterel. Then his errant thoughts wandered back to the claret he had drunk, and he wondered if it was worth while to ask the *sommelier* if there was much of it, and he remembered that rather than Bordeaux he should have drunk Bur-

gundy this evening, since there was no Burgundy worthy of the name on the Cote d'Azur. Why was Burgundy so good in Belgium? That clubbing together of the Flemish *bourgeois* explained it all, he thought. Then back his mind came to the table opposite him, and he watched through discreet eyes the flush of interest come and pass, come and pass over the cheeks of the lady who had attracted him, imagined subjects for her conversation, asked himself — a favourite habit this when feminine youth pleased him — what her mother was like. . . .

And so the hour passed, and Charles, looking at his watch, called for his bill, and as he called, glancing after the retreating waiter, he observed something —

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH TWO FRENCHMEN ARE TAUGHT A LESSON AND CHARLES BEGINS TO CAPITULATE

WHAT Charles saw happens not once or twice, but all the time in that Paris, or not to be too particular, in that whole world, which finds its pleasure, its pastime, in public. One cannot sit in a restaurant or in a theatre and expect the reserve and reticence of private life. One is looked at, criticised, appraised. A woman, — her age, her looks, her virtue, her frock, her jewels: all are discussed. A man: someone, be it only the head waiter, looks and decides — decides all sorts of things: whether you will be worth special attention with a view to the future, with the idea of turning you into a *client de la maison;* whether your clothes indicate the ability to pay such a bill as should be prepared; whether you are English or German or a rich Brazilian. Sit alone in the nearer stalls of the theatre of folly and the appraisement is based on the same values. All, or most, of these charming young ladies who posture and prance in the first and second row of the chorus wonder for which of them you sit there, to which of them you aspire. . . .

So what Charles saw was not unusual, not to be wondered at, not, indeed, all things considered, a thing in such a place to raise the ire of the average man. He had seen such things before — oh! often — and his blood had

not boiled. Rather — sometimes — had he been amused, interested. But this time was different — altogether different, Charles would have said to himself if he had stopped to think. But he did not stop to think — and so the mischief began. But first let me tell you what he did see, or rather what he saw and heard. His table was near the corner of the restaurant, the next did occupy the corner, and next to it, at right angles to his own, sat two Frenchmen side by side, raking the room with their glances. They were fat, heavy-coloured, wearing mustaches that looked as if they had been stuck on after their faces had been shaved and reshaved and oiled. The blue of beards that would not be repressed shone through the flesh of their heavy jowls. Unlike in everything but unessentials, they still appeared as if they had come from the same mould. Both, of course, wore evening dress and soft-fronted shirts, and one had a velvet collar to his coat. I wonder if such men are not nature's homage to art. Rossetti and Burne-Jones drew and painted, and lo! drawing-rooms of West Kensington and Fulham were filled with full-lipped, large-throated damsels. So now do Augustus John and Henry Lamb alter the feminine young of Chelsea. Perhaps if Albert Guillaume had never drawn, France might have been saved such men as Charles now watched. He had seen them look at each newcomer, had imagined rather than heard their comments. For a moment between two sticks of *asperges Lauris* they had discussed him. He paid no attention. He did not set up to be particular, but the type displeased him. Now, however, they had found something more to their fancy than a young English-

man. They had seen and were discussing the young girl who was with Charles's American, discussing her with that ingenuous lack of concealment which Frenchmen affect. She would not have heard, but had she looked up she would have seen. Fortunately, however, her companion and a *macédoine de fruits* held her attention. Anyhow, Charles thought, she was a child and would not have understood.

There is a type of Parisian who prides himself on his enterprise — enterprise, be sure, exercised almost invariably in one direction. Unhappily, the men whom Charles watched were of this type. It is a defect of a quality that the Latin often cannot distinguish between a gentleman and a cad; and, more, that one cannot often tell with convenient readiness whether a Latin himself is a gentleman or a cad. The distinction is drawn far less sharply in France and in Italy than in England. One supposes that it is a result of a looser social system, of grades less clearly defined, of castes less in number and yet merging more naturally the one into the other. On the other hand, in France or in Italy it is generally easy enough to tell immediately that a lady is a lady and not a *demi-mondaine;* seldom, if ever, would a Frenchman make a mistake about a countrywoman of his own. So, too, can he tell generally that a woman is at heart virtuous, unapproachable. But when he comes to consider the woman of England or of the United States he is at sea. Largely it is her own fault. Her clothes have often that note of extravagance which he does not associate with the *femme du monde;* and her very frankness, her courage, deceives him.

The Frenchmen continued to look, and they continued to talk and to appraise. Suddenly one drew a gold-mounted letter-case from his pocket and took out a card. Writing on it a few words, he called a *maître d'hôtel* with whom evidently he was on terms. I confess that Charles, scenting what was to happen, attempted to listen to what passed. The *maître d'hôtel* was discretion itself: he did not turn as one less used to such traffic might have done; but Charles caught a glance directed at the reflection of the American and his companion in the looking-glass. Such readiness is a French birthright.

"*Oui, monsieur,*" he answered, "*parfaitement.*"

A minute passed, and Charles, hoping he was mistaken, saw his American call for and pay his bill, and rise. For a moment he and his companion waited for their cloaks. As the man is helped into his by the woman of the cloakroom and fumbles for a franc, the *maître d'hôtel* covered the shoulders of the lady and, as he did so, slipped quietly into her hand the card he had been given. Now that it had happened as he had expected, Charles could hold himself hardly at all. Jumping to his feet, he crossed the restaurant quickly and touched the American on the shoulder. What he was going to say he hardly knew; all he did know was that this girl, this lady, should be protected from such an insult as was offered her, and that she must be protected without a scene. Her very innocence saved her, however. Not looking at the card, she passed it to her father just as he realised that Charles was speaking to him.

"Poppa" — I must be honest; and even the word "Poppa" from red, full, youthful lips has charms which

the printed letters could never convey — "Poppa, this waiter has given me this: for you evidently, or in mistake."

"One second, dear" — and then to Charles: "I am glad, sir, to have this second opportunity of apolog—"

"No, sir; it is not of that I want to speak. The *maître d'hôtel* here has made a mistake. Your daughter has been given something which is not for her. Will you take it from her now at once? I will explain afterwards if you will allow me."

The American turned again to his daughter and took the card she held out and glanced at it. At once his hair seemed to bristle; thunder descended on his brow; for a moment, so rapid was the flow of deep red blood to his face, Charles feared he would have a fit; his jowl hardened; something primitive surged up . . . and then suddenly he calmed, turning to Charles and addressing him as if nothing had occurred to shake his equanimity: "Thank you, sir; I am deeply obliged to you. Perhaps you will add to your kindness by taking my daughter to our car. Alison, this gentleman will look after you for one minute."

And Charles had to go, had no choice, although he would have given all he had at that moment to have sent the child off with her father and himself have waited. That, however, was impossible. Above all, a scene must be avoided, or even argument, till she was safe outside the restaurant. He had no right to interfere further; and unless her father's rage, only damped back momentarily, Charles was sure, did bring on a fit, there was no danger for him. Such people as these Guillaumesque

Frenchmen were not dangerous — not dangerous, certainly, to an Englishman or an American. But, as he escorted his charge through the revolving door and installed her in the waiting *coupé*, Charles thought furiously and longed to know what was happening.

Not at once did he learn. Three minutes passed and the door revolved again and the American was to be seen, being bowed out as if nothing had happened or could have happened. And Charles almost thought that nothing could have happened. But, glancing down by accident at the strong hand that turned the handle of the carriage door, he saw that its knuckles were bruised and marked with blood, that the skin was broken. It was clear, though, that whatever had happened had happened in some seemly manner. The American's knuckles might have suffered, but his equanimity remained undisturbed. His voice was unshaken as he turned to Charles: —

"Sir, I should like to know to whom I have cause to be grateful. And you will allow me to give you my card. We are stopping, my daughter and I, at the Meurice. May we hope to see you again? Alison, my dear, Mr. Caerleon has placed me under a great obligation — no, nothing you 'd understand, just now, at all events. Why not ask Mr. Caerleon to have lunch with us to-morrow? Could you come, Mr. Caerleon? At half-past twelve? Do try. I have an idea I knew an uncle of yours, Lord Bodmin, — a regular sport he was, — some years ago out West."

Of course Charles could n't accept. His train would by midday to-morrow have landed him at Monte Carlo.

Indeed, there was only just time for him to catch it. Still, he was a quick thinker. That reputation he had earned, and deserved, at school.

"Thank you, Miss Gorham; I shall be delighted. I shall look forward to half-past twelve to-morrow," and closing the *coupé* door, he stepped back, and went again into the restaurant to pay his bill and to get his coat.

There were still such signs of riot as the hustling waiters had not time to remove. A table was overturned; an ice-pail lay on the floor, its contents and those of a bottle of champagne mingling together in a dirty puddle; a tablecloth with red stains was being folded quickly by a waiter who deserved praise for doing an unusual thing with the air of its being a daily custom. He, too, was not to be disturbed. The two ignoble warriors were nowhere to be seen. Charles addressed himself to the *maître d'hôtel:* —

"Ask for my bill at once," he said, "I am in a hurry; and my coat and hat, too, quickly. And now, you, my friend, it seems *you* have been let off. I 've a good mind to give you a hiding myself. What do you mean by insulting an Englishwoman?" (Charles, it will be noticed, already thought of Miss Gorham as an Englishwoman!) "What do you mean by not knowing a lady when you see her? I 've a good mind to have you turned out of your job" — and Charles did not speak at random. The *patron* valued his custom too highly to keep a servant who had made a mistake of that kind if he could please his customer by dismissing him. "But, after all, what's the use?" thought Charles. "The poor devil only acted

according to his way." And the "poor devil's" reply almost amused him: —

"I am very sorry, monsieur. I made a mistake. I did not know. Never have I made such a mistake before. How could I tell? I did what I was told. Another time I shall be more careful —" Charles picked up his change, and, turning on his heel, left him still protesting.

Evidently there was to be no railway journey that night. The blue eyes of Miss Alison Gorham were for the moment more attractive then the azure skies of the South. Charles had thought quickly, but now he did not think honestly nor proudly. Perhaps he was a little ashamed of himself. Anyhow, he must hurry — yes, perhaps there was just time — to the Gare de Lyon and stop his man and rescue his luggage, or such of it as had not been booked through to Monte Carlo. For a moment, as he stepped into the taxi-auto, he thought that he had been a fool and that he would catch his train and would telegraph his regrets from Marseilles. After all, for what should he stop in Paris? He had received Mr. Gorham's thanks. What more could follow? And yet he knew that he would stop in Paris, and that — well, he would for the moment make no more plans.

CHAPTER VI

IN WHICH THE CAPITULATION CONTINUES AND PLANS ARE MADE

THE MEURICE is a nice amiable hotel, and Charles was in a nice amiable mood when he arrived there sharp to the hour the next morning. The Parisian sky was blue and there was neither wind nor fog. Such days in February are rare, rarer in London than in Paris, less rare in New York than in Europe. But they do happen. And when they happen they are days on which one is destined to do divinely foolish things, to err wisely, to make love with indiscretion, to sin with forgiveness. All Charles's doubts had vanished with the night. Sleep brings prudence, but sleep on the night that had passed had given him no fresh misgivings. Since when had he slept so long in Paris? Since when, indeed? Rather his habit had been to dine and to linger, and then if it were too late for the play — and it usually was unless the dinner was bad! — to visit a music-hall of the outer boulevards, to visit afterwards this restaurant or that (or both). . . . The very thought of such a tour had nauseated him when he had failed by one minute to retrieve his hand baggage at the Gare de Lyon on the previous evening. He had returned to the Chatham — and he had slept.

And now as he turned into the Meurice Charles thought only of his hostess. Truth to tell, he had

thought only of her ever since he had tumbled from his warm bed into his English cold bath. Even perhaps he had dreamed of her, and of impossibly ugly Frenchmen, and of damaged heads, and of . . . No, his dreams had been a medley from which it is only possible to recapture one thing clearly, the curiously haunting blue eyes of Miss Gorham.

That charming young lady was not in the hotel to receive him. Her father was — and for a troubled moment Charles feared that the meal was to be a bachelor one. But it appeared that Miss Gorham was out shopping and should have been back half an hour ago. Her father could n't imagine (although the same thing had happened nearly every day ever since he had seriously noticed her existence) what could have occurred. It was such a pity, he said. He had impressed on the manager the necessity of having a good lunch, and had said it was to be ready exactly at half-past twelve. Now what would happen to the *homard à la Newburg?* Damn the *homard à la Newburg,* Charles said to himself; and anyhow, why order lobster in Paris when they could give you crayfish? And while the father talked — prattled, rather, if you can speak of so gorgeous a mountain of flesh prattling — and while Charles chafed, Miss Gorham arrived — arrived radiant, far more attractive in appearance, Charles thought, than even she had been last night. Personally I don't consider he was in a fit case to decide. But there is no doubt that Celia Alison Gorham did arrive radiant. Everyone thought so, and showed that they thought so — from the manager of the hotel, who chanced to be in the hall, to the page boy who swung

round and round the murderous door. Sunshine entered with her.

Each of the three was just a little shy. Presumably her father had explained to Miss Gorham something of what had occurred on the previous evening. It was n't exactly a thing on which a well-brought-up young woman could enlarge, but she looked her clear if rather embarrassed gratitude. "Papa" was franker in a more confused way. He treated Charles as an old friend, almost as a friend of the family. Soon Charles began to know where he was, or rather he began to know where to place the Gorham family. Philadelphia. Mr. Gorham was — well, he had been in trade; exactly what trade was n't specified: it did n't matter. Now he was in street railroads. Charles caught at vague reminiscences of articles in "McClure's Magazine" (a rotten place, America, but why don't we have magazines like that?) — all about five-cent fares and Wall Street robber-barons and Widener and Elkins and franchises — but his memories were n't clear. What was clear, however, was that, however vicious had been the beginnings, the public over there had extenuated the results. It might have been wicked to have made your money in street railroads, but as long as you stuck to it, well, you were all right. That hasty consideration fitted Mr. Gorham. More could not have been expected of Charles — or of anyone else, English or American, for the matter of that. Mr. Gorham *might* have made his money honestly.

You could see that things of that sort never entered the daughter's head. She drew her money — and spent

it. A charming habit, and one not confined to the young ladies of America. Where the money came from was not her business. And anyhow, she spent it well. On herself largely — oh! with such success: her dress to-day, tailor-made, severe, was a dream — but also, it was clear as she talked, on others when she had the time. She had interests: she could talk about Matisse and about Masaccio, about Saint-Germain and Richmond, about Marie Corelli and John Galsworthy and Arthur Stringer. I am not eating their lunch, but I can see them eating it: it has gone to my head; I can hear what they all say — and, well, the truth is that Miss Gorham was really and truly a peach.

If anyone had told Charles after his luncheon that his hostess was a peach he would have been indignant at the combined familiarity and vulgarity. He would have jibbed, quite rightly, at the word, but, if he had stopped to reason candidly with himself, he would have confessed that although the word was offensive the sense was correct enough. He did enjoy himself. He forgot all about the Riviera, and suddenly, and to his own surprise, as he drank black coffee, sipped '48 brandy, and smoked one of those long, slim, black cigars particularly affected by boys and Brazilians, he heard his own voice suggesting to Mr. Gorham that he and his daughter should, if they had nothing else to do, dine with him that night at Durand's and go to the play. Charles had the clothes he was standing up in, and he had his dress-clothes, but all the rest of his luggage was by now on that arid Monte Carlo station crying out to be claimed. Nothing of that sort worried him, though. He was caught in the mesh of

a new happiness, something different, and, luggage or no luggage, he was stopping where he was.

"What do you think, Alison, dear? Can we accept Mr. Caerleon's invitation? It would be very nice, but what was it you asked me to show you? Did n't you want me to take you to a music-hall and to supper at the Abbaye de Thelème? That would n't fit in exactly, would it?"

Charles saw through the disingenuousness of that footpad gallant, Alison's "Papa." In the first place, his French would n't carry him through a French play; in the second, the theatre would mean an early and hurried dinner; in the third, he wanted to go to the Folies Bergères and to the Abbaye. Charles thought it likely (and he was right) that Miss Gorham had hardly even heard of either tumultuous and questionable joy. Truth was that Mr. Gorham was one of those timorous *viveurs* who wish to "live," but who dare not, who investigate their pleasures with all their women-folk they can summon round them. I don't think much of taking one's wife on a tour of the *boites* of Montmartre — but one's daughter at twenty-two! Still, it's done!

CHAPTER VII

QUITE A LONG CHAPTER, ENDING UP AT THE ABBAYE AND WITH CHARLES SUCCOURING BEAUTY IN DISTRESS

THERE are so many Americans in Paris that one can hardly avoid writing of the place in diluted Americanese, so I may as well make no bones about saying that the fact that Mr. Gorham had or affected to have other plans for the evening did n't trouble Charles any. Things could be fixed. And they were. Of course it had been stupid of him to ask them to dine at Durand's. That admirable and admirably discreet restaurant was no more. They were to dine with him over the way at Larue's, and then to go to a compromise in the way of theatres — one of the new little theatres where half a dozen one-act plays enabled one to choose one's own hour of arrival. Charles for a wonder had n't been in Paris for several months, and so, when Mr. Gorham said that someone had told him of the Théâtre Moderne, the *maître d'hôtel* was appealed to. "Yes," he said, "it is still open." One has to be sure of one's bearings with these theatrical enterprises. They spring up like mushrooms overnight and disappear as quickly. This one, however, seemed to have come to stay, and Charles secured a *loge*. Afterwards — well, afterwards should look after itself. He hoped that if "Papa" was so set on the Mountain they might bring Miss Gorham home first. Charles,

like all young rakes, was "all agin" taking young ladies to such places.

Dinner at Larue's was good, Muscovite, amusing and expensive. All that I need say is that Charles improved the occasion with Miss Gorham, and that he won the golden opinions of her father with the food and wines that he had ordered. Such knowledge was second nature with him. He was to feel at fault later!

I wonder whether any of you who read this book have visited the Théâtre Moderne, and whether as you entered it you realised what a warren it was, and what would be your fate if it caught fire. This possibility really did take Charles by the throat, as he went up the narrow stairs, surrendered his party's hats and cloaks, and went into that tiny hall where *strapontins* effectually blocked every passage, and where there were certainly twice as many people as there was proper room for. But I must hurry over this episode. For years when Charles thought of it his flesh would creep, the blood would crowd into his face. What had he brought them to? Too much he was embarrassed even to remember that the suggestion of the Théâtre Moderne was not his, that, indeed, he had told his guests that he knew nothing about it. But still, they were his guests. There was no getting away from that. And already, too, he was beginning to feel that he was intended by fate to protect Alison Gorham from her father's carelessness. Heaven send she did n't understand! No such luck, he feared: a young woman who knew the ideas of Paris as she had shown at lunch that she knew them, who knew the Rue

Lafitte as well as she knew the Rue de la Paix, who admired Picasso and chattered about Colette Willy . . . There is something disarming and wonderful about a young girl's disingenuousness. Is n't it Una that she reminds one of now and then? But still, he did n't dare look at her . . . and from that day to this he has never dared to ask. As for Mr. Gorham, well, Mr. Gorham slept.

And ultimately they emerged — safe, Charles said to himself, safe, thank Heaven! His vivid imagination pictured the effect of a fire. The staircase would have become a pit such as that into which they drive wild animals; that window giving on the gallery would be broken down and the crowd would shoot out of it to pile into a heap of broken bodies on the floor beneath. And yet, Paris prided herself on her civilisation!

Now, of course, Mr. Gorham was awake. Now *he* was to take charge of the evening. It was to be his call now. You could see that everything that had gone before, including his sleep in the theatre, was mere preparation for the serious business of nocturnal enjoyment. And he had only just returned to Paris from New York, after a strenuous, fighting autumn, an autumn in which, he proudly told Charles, he'd succeeded in rounding up his enemies, had given them the little end of the horn. Charles began to think he would n't persist in his programme of taking Alison — yes, I 'm afraid now if I 'm to be honest I must drop ceremony: Charles did so, in his mind at least — to the Mountain. But habit was too strong. It was evident that father and daughter did most things in common, and although there were signs

that Mr. Gorham would n't have objected if she had said she wanted to go home, he had n't the strength of mind to suggest it openly. Really all that he had wanted was a companion, some kind of companion, and since he had Charles his daughter would no doubt be better in bed. He even went to the length of asking her if she was n't tired. Can she be blamed if she answered "No"? After all, she, too, was pleased to have a second escort. She did n't know that the whole excursion was distasteful to him — or if she knew she did n't show it.

Charles had been a little wicked. Hoping that the Mountain part of the programme would be abandoned, he had also another string to his bow. It was Saturday, and it was n't likely there 'd be a table at the Abbaye. And if there was n't a table they could n't stop, and if they could n't stop they 'd go home — and then he could make some more seemly plan for the next day. Of course if he 'd played fair with Mr. Gorham he 'd have told him, or would have offered, to telephone for a table. That would have made sure.

The Cerberus who guards the iron portals in the Place Pigalle recognised Charles, touched his hat, and admitted the party without question. The entrance was flanked with the horrid denizens of the Quarter. "My, but that one 's a peach?" is the translation into a kind of English of what Charles heard as Miss Gorham passed over the threshold. Some people were not even being allowed to enter. At another time Charles would have found reason for real if rather unkind pleasure in the discomfiture of two gentlemen from the English Midlands, with their accent thick on their tongues, who had money and

large cigars but no dress-clothes and not quite the air that could propitiate Cerberus. Mr. and Miss Gorham mounted the stairs first, having to make room, Charles noted with a little joy, for others who were descending, bowed out with the mocking servility, the insolent courtesy, of *maîtres d'hôtel*, who were saying what they now repeated to Mr. Gorham: "No, monsieur, I am sorry, but there is absolutely not a place. If monsieur had only telephoned. Yes, there are tables still empty, but they are engaged. . . ." At that moment Charles was seen. "Ah, Monsieur Caerleon, how many are you? I have your table. The table you like —" and Charles, who had kept in the background purposely, fearing such an effect if he were seen, found himself taking charge again, following in the wake of the *patron*, with the Gorhams following him. Such things are done for the habitué. "Scoundrels," Mr. Gorham said; but the urbane Albert if he heard paid no attention. Pleased to see an old client, he fluttered round Charles for a moment, cigarette in hand, seated the party, and was gone — to welcome or repulse new visitors according to their wealth, their beauty, their usefulness.

Charles was n't really happy. The Abbaye does n't provide an orgy for its patrons, but its incidents are not always of the most edifying. He looked round the room, at this table and that, at the gross, overfed men, at the honest family parties, at the young wives, at the very obvious cocottes, at the healthy young Englishmen, and at the tired, pale-faced South Americans, and then he turned to the lady for whom just now he felt himself responsible. A few pages back Charles likened her to a

wild rose that had strayed into a hothouse. I fancy that his new attempt at an analogy was even less successful — so unsuccessful now that I 've forgotten what it was, but her presence did make him honestly uncomfortable, and not the less so in that he had seen half a dozen people round him whom he knew, men and women who would n't understand Alison and whom (he said to himself) pray God Alison would n't understand. But theirs was only a party of three — and as of these two were happy, who should complain? Mr. Gorham was as happy as he could ever be. *Soupe à l'ognon gratinée* he had ordered, and some 1900 Moët, and he looked pinker than ever, more successful, more satisfied. His eyes were narrowed to slits in the surrounding flesh. Here was real life. But his daughter's eyes were not narrowed: they were wide open, round; her cheeks were flushed with a pretty excitement; she looked curiously here and there, alert, busy with conjecture, turning to Charles to ask a question, and then fixing her gaze once more on the tall, slim, Spanish dancer who was dancing so ill that her friends had to pull themselves together to remember that she could dance at all. The artist dies in such an atmosphere. A good chef comes to London and is ruined in a year; a good *maître d'hôtel* goes to New York and in six months, remonstrated with for shaking the Burgundy, answers indignantly, "I know my business!" The young Spaniard knew her business too; she even knew that those front teeth of hers, slightly divided, had their value in the market — but she also knew that not often was it worth her while really to dance, really to abandon herself to the moment. But if to discerning eyes she was

a failure, a young Javanese or Tahitian damsel who moved sinuously from table to table, taking a glass of champagne here, ruffling the hair of a dress-shirted satyr there, was a success. Her presence alone was worth the preposterous price of the *soupe à l'ognon* and the champagne. Tahitian or Javanese, she brought with her the air of the South Seas; she was a good Gauguin come to life. Where, one wonders, did Albert find her? And where will she go?

Miss Gorham did n't know enough to despise the Spanish dancer, but the beauty of the young girl meant more to her. It shut out what was ugly. It brought together what was beautiful in the room. Charles did n't suspect, and her father could n't even have understood, that while she sat there with her eyes rapt, with her lips slightly parted with excitement, she was making a little philosophy for herself to cover this kind of thing that she was looking at for the first time. She could n't see that it was very sad, but she could see that it was very bad. She could realise the harm it was doing, the life's blood it was draining away. Surrender oneself to that sordid magic and one could never again be quite the same. Keep away from it if you can, she said to herself, but if you can't keep away from it, keep your soul away from it, surrender your real self not at all. And she looked at Charles. . . . "Ah," she thought to herself, "how I hope that he at least looks at it as he might at a picture. Manet has painted such things. One may love Manet and not be soiled." And all her thoughts showed perhaps what a very young woman she was!

Alison's mood was soon dissipated by a little comedy

that was taking place at the next table. You see in the fashionable night restaurants of Paris one is n't supposed to feed and drink reasonably. One pays for the *attractions* by ordering champagne at at least twenty francs a bottle. Perhaps the regular client is absolved from such a tax by reason of his regularity or of his distinction — but even so his economies, whether they be of purse or of stomach, are not encouraged, and there are many little ways of overcoming them. Now next to Mr. Gorham a young Englishman was sitting, by himself: one might properly imagine him an habitué; he knew the ways of the place; as he ate he read the "Lanterne de Paris," and his supper was of the kind that was obviously ordered for use and not for show — the same soup that Mr. Gorham had ordered — I don't want to speckle this page with yet another repetition in italic of its name — a *filet mignon* — ah! but the italics come all the same — and a pear. With it he drank whisky and soda. So far good. He would get out for something under a louis, and by the two facts of his economy and that he sat alone the house would lose. Still, he was satisfied. Soon, however, his supper finished, he looked here and there, recognised one dancer and then another. One was a young English girl, with yellow, loose hair standing out round her neck like that of a little child who has just had her head washed, with a Russian belted costume, bare legs, and high red boots embroidered in some Tartar manner. She danced about as well as any young woman in an eighteenpenny subscription ball in the Chelsea Town Hall. But she had some vague youthful charm — or she had had! Anyhow, she knew Mr. Gorham's neighbour

and ran bird-like across the room, to shake him by the hand, to offer, indeed, to kiss him — an offer that was smilingly declined. "Sit down and have a drink."

"Please. Oh, yes!" she answered; and he called a waiter to demand a glass and stretched his hand for the bottle of whisky, which, as he was a client, had been left on the table. "Oh, no, no. We dancers are only allowed to drink champagne."

The young man swallowed his momentary resentment, ordered a half-bottle, and wondered how he could have been such a fool as not to have anticipated this pleasant trick. And Albert, as he distributed souvenirs of the evening in the shape of pretty fans, balloons, and huge useless rattles, noticed with an instant's satisfaction that the table was being made to pay for itself, that his young women were doing their business!

But I cannot go on talking about the Abbaye: such little comedies are so common on the Butte, and I must push on. All sorts of clever people have described, have over-described, sometimes with open-mouthed wonder, the supper places of Paris. *I* have a *story* to tell. I have said that Charles had recognised acquaintances when he came in. Well, there's a very praiseworthy convention that forbids a man accosting a friend in a place of this kind, in any place, perhaps, when he's with a lady that is n't known to both of them. But one can send a note. And that is what one friend of Charles's did, a man of no importance to this story, a young Frenchman, whom he knew well enough and liked well enough. "I 'm so glad to see you back in Paris," the note ran. "Come out for a moment and tell me about your-

self." A waiter brought it and Charles took it from him not unwillingly, but without enthusiasm.

"Young dog," Mr. Gorham said facetiously. "There he is, Alison, having a letter sent him by some girl he knows." Charles did n't think it worth while to deny the impeachment. Later he was sorry he had n't. It never occurred to him that they had n't really seen who had sent the note. It never occurred to him, no, not for a moment, that Alison should have paid the slightest attention to what he thought her father's silly joke. And so, unsuspicious, in a moment or two he excused himself, looked across to the watching Monsieur Berthez, nodded, and followed him out to where the cloak-room attendants, the musicians, and the young dancing girls stood waiting on events, and where they would be able perhaps to talk undisturbed for a few moments.

It was a conversation of no importance, and having exchanged a little news, and having made a tentative engagement to lunch together on the morrow, Charles thought he might as well seize the opportunity to wash his hands. Perhaps Mr. Gorham would have the courage of his programme and see the sun rise!

Now, if you know the Abbaye, you know that from just behind where the musicians play there runs a narrow passage which leads to a cloak-room in which in effect dancers and guests, whether they be men or women, restore the ravages of the night in one almost promiscuous medley. It was so to-night. Charles washed and gingerly brushed his hair, and as he laid down the brush he was suddenly conscious that something a little poignant was happening just round the corner in the

passage. Why, turning that corner on his way back to the restaurant, he should have interfered, he never quite knew. But there are some sorts of things that the Anglo-Saxon man by nature, by training, by tradition, does not put up with, and he had more than ordinary reason to believe that something of the kind was happening now. A young girl, slim, a little pale, a little weary, — for those shadows under brown eyes were not of artifice, — was being in effect pinned against the wall by a man whose every line was a betrayal, whose character stood out, who looked neither a gentleman nor a man, whose sneering mouth and brutal eyes were bent on his prey — for prey the girl was, cringing now, almost fainting, frightened, fascinated by terror.

"No, no — please, please, no. I will try to-morrow. I can't now. I have n't got it. Let me go. I swear —"

"Yes, you swear," the man answered; "you are ready enough to swear. Give me back now what I gave you, and give me what you promised and I'll let you go, or otherwise, by God, I'll tell him — Now, give it me — " And he seemed to tighten his grip on her shoulder, so that she squealed like a trapped rabbit.

Then it was that Charles interfered. The girl was no better than she should be, no doubt, — obviously, we should say, — but the man was a blackguard. He had been too wrapped in his own actions to notice the Englishman's approach, and the first he knew of his presence was a sudden grasp on the scruff of his neck and the sense of being sent reeling, of falling headlong on the floor. Not waiting to see what happened, or would happen next, Charles turned to the girl: —

"Now, my child, get your cloak — oh! I see you've got it. I 'll put you in a taxi-auto. You 'll be gone before that brute picks himself up."

The girl gasped, shivered, and looked at Charles. She saw he was worth looking at, but for the moment she had other things to think of — "Monsieur, I can't go. I have just arrived. I have to meet someone here. I must wait. Oh, but I 'm afraid —"

"No, don't be afraid. I 'll look after that brute there. He shan't annoy you any more. You can be certain of that."

But his assurances were in vain. Suddenly the girl broke down. Hiding her face, her pretty face, in her hands, she burst into tears, tears that flooded from her eyes, and trickled through her fingers, while her slim body shook with her sobs.

All this had taken far less time to happen than it does to write about. The man had picked himself up and had slunk into the cloak-room, but people were beginning to pass up and down the passage, and although a young woman crying was not an unusual event (no, nor a young man comforting her either!) in the Abbaye, yet Charles, Englishman, was hating the fact that there was a scene, and that he was part of it. One thing, though, was clear. The thing could n't go on. It must be stopped.

"Tell me," Charles said — "now, pull yourself together; grip your teeth; stop crying. Tell me what 's the matter." All this in French, of course. "What's he asking for? I've got two minutes to give you. Tell me what it is, and I'll see if I can help you."

Whether the young woman did, in very fact, pull her-

self together by gripping her teeth may be doubted, but certainly she ceased to cry. "I will tell you," she said. "He is n't my lover, that man. Word of honour, he is n't. But he 's helped me with money. You see it was like this: my friend was away in America, and I fell ill. I did n't know his address. . . . I had to sell all my things and I had nothing left, and then suddenly he cabled that he was coming back to Paris. But I had no clothes to meet him in and no apartment any more, and then that man there lent me money. . . . I promised to get it from Monsieur Finot" — the name of the friend apparently — "directly I saw him. But I did n't like to ask him for money at once. And now, because I have n't paid, he 's going to tell him" — the poor thing was getting her pronouns mixed, but I am a faithful reporter — "and he 'll say he 's my lover — and it is n't true. . . ."

Charles interrupted: "What do you owe him?"

"He gave me a thousand francs, and I promised to give him back fifteen hundred. And he will have it."

Now Charles was young, but he was not inexperienced. Really, there was no excuse for him. He had that letter of Messrs. Coutts in his pocket-book, but then he had also several *billets*, each for five hundred francs . . . and here was a young girl crying, miserable. Of course it might all be a plant . . . but he did n't think so. What would he do with the money anyway? It would go South with him, and if he had luck it would never be wanted, and if he had no luck, well, then it would be lost. How much better that this child should have it, should have at least what she wanted, the sum she named. It would get her out of her trouble. After

all, she had n't appealed to him. She had n't asked him for money. She did n't look as if she expected any. He 'd brought her confession on himself. . . . Yes, she should have it. She had sweet eyes.

All this took but a moment to ponder and to decide. Charles took out his pocket-book and withdrew three notes each for five hundred francs. She watched him, her eyes narrowing, her breath coming faster. "Here you are," he said, — "or no: I 'll give it to him myself. Wait!" And he strode into the cloak-room, where he saw for the first time that he really had done some damage with his impetuous attack. There was blood on the man's collar and blood on his shirt-front. Apparently the poor devil had fallen on his nose. However, nothing really serious had happened; it seemed that no bones were broken. "Look here, my man," — Charles addressed him in his most English and most arrogant manner, — "I 'm sorry I did not break your neck. I did n't even break your nose: I wish I had. You 'd better go home quick or I 'll have you thrown out. But first tell me, what does that lady owe you? What were you asking for?"

The man dropped the wet towel with which he was bathing his bruised nose and looked at Charles. Something in the Englishman's eye must have told him that he 'd better tell the truth.

"Fifteen hundred francs. That 's what she owes me. Stole it from me — almost."

"Stop that!" said Charles. "It 's no use lying to me. I know. You lent her a thousand francs and you expect to be paid an extra five hundred for the loan — just for a

few days; and you expect to be able to go on bleeding her as you do a dozen others" — he was drawing a bow at a venture here, but justly, as it happened — "for just as long as she's got any money to give you. Well, let me tell you that it's not going to work that way. Here is your fifteen hundred francs" — the man's eyes glistened — "but I 'm in Paris a good deal and I shall hear. If ever you annoy, if ever you go near, that lady again, I'll break every bone in your body." And handing him the notes Charles quietly turned his back. "Faugh!" he added, and blew air through his teeth.

There remains little more to relate of this incident. Outside in the passage, a dozen paces away, the girl still stood, leaning against the wall, shaking with sobs that brought no tears, sobs of terror. "I've paid him," Charles told her. "He won't frighten you any more. He's had enough." The girl interrupted him with thanks. Would he tell her his name? Perhaps she could soon repay him. No, he would n't. He did n't care. He did n't even ask for hers. "Go into the restaurant," he said, "and forget. People won't notice you've been crying. No, powder your nose here — don't go into the cloak-room: you'd see him. . . ." And patting her shoulder with a kind, a fraternal hand, he left her.

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH THE LITTLE BLUE TURBAN APPEARS

CHARLES, as he returned to his host's table, thought very little more of this incident. True, it had cost him money. Well, what if it had? He might so easily have spent it less well. It was unlikely that he would have spent it better. With him it was not a case of easy come, but it was generally a case of easy go. Whence the perplexity, that little cloud no bigger (at the moment) than a man's hand, which was at the back of his mind. He made a little grimace to himself and after that troubled himself not at all either with the lady who had been the cause of his loss or with the loss itself.

But the Gorhams. . . . Back at the table Charles found himself in an atmosphere a little altered, a little chilly. The truth was that he had been away much longer than he had realised, and Alison, who had n't her father's resources in the way of bacchic interest, had remarked on his absence. Mr. Gorham had asked the waiter: "Where is the gentleman who was here just now?"

And the waiter had answered: "Sir, he is talking to a lady behind there." An indiscretion, of course. Such things don't, should n't happen in Paris. *Pauvre garçon!* He is no longer employed at the Abbaye.

Mr. Gorham, I fear, took it all as a matter of course,

but alas! Alison heard both question and answer. Now, let us do her justice. Not for a moment would she then, or before, have acknowledged to herself any unusual, any undue, interest in her father's guest. She even thought of him always as her father's guest, his friend — or she thought she did. But she did resent his going off for a quarter of an hour — more perhaps — and talking to some woman. She said to herself that it was n't quite the thing to do. A sense of resentment rose like river mist. Why did Mr. Caerleon know this place so well? Why was he received as an accustomed guest? Why could n't he have waited till she and her father had gone home?

And then Charles arrived — to be greeted by Mr. Gorham with a facetious "Oh, we know what *you 've* been doing" — a remark to which Charles attached no kind of importance, or he might have gone out of his way to add to his conventional excuses for his absence. Nor did he realise why Alison turned her shoulder on him and seemed to be contemplating the orchestra. As I have said, he thought first that the atmosphere was a little altered . . . but that seemed impossible.

Alison was not contemplating the orchestra, but she was looking towards its corner. Her young heart was filled with an angry curiosity to see the cause of her resentment. She had seen Charles come out of the passage, and she had as yet seen no woman come out. She wanted to know who had kept him. Not that she really cared. Pure curiosity, of course. But there it was: she would like to see.

She did not have long to wait. Her intuition would

have told her, even if the young girl who emerged, radiant now, from the cloak-room had n't, to the sharp eyes of a girl, given herself away by looking at every other table save that at which Charles sat — and then one second later looking at that in the mirror at her back. But her gaze, Alison saw, was not provocative. It was not friendly. Rather it seemed sad. And that possible sadness Alison misread.

The young girl — for she was young enough Alison saw at once: much of an age with herself — stood for some minutes searching the room as if for a friend, and while she searched Alison watched her, and watching, the young American's depression deepened, her resentment grew. Who was this girl who stood in such a scene with such assurance, such brave assurance? She was mistress of herself, whoever she was, and mistress of the servants in the room, assured, courageous, armed. If she represented that which good women feared, was she not sure of victory? Where, Alison asked herself, among her school friends, the friends she had left in Philadelphia, whom she had made in Europe, was there so much easy beauty, so much vitality, so ready a carriage?

And, in truth, Charles's protégée might have been held to do his taste some credit. Figure to yourself a young girl, really a young girl, not so very slim, not tall, dressed simply for the evening in lemon yellow soft silk open at the neck, and with on her head the most bewitching, the cutest little dark blue turban, a real turban, fitting the head closely, following its lines, from which at the most provocative angle flowered a white aigrette. Under the turban yellow hair and brown eyes and teeth

regular as a string of pearls (shaming indeed her neck's string of real pearls that were nothing particular to boast about). Her lips were slightly parted: they had the shape poets write of. Artifice, Alison was able to assure herself — and justly: artifice had had a hand, but it had made no attempt at concealment; it had no shame and the more beauty. And her face? Yes, dear lady, powder was thick upon it. At one moment it looked dead white; at another it carried, shone with, all the gay translucent colours of happiness and health. The truth is that the young lady had the art.

In a few moments she seemed, this stranger, to decide to go to a table which it appeared had been kept for her, or for some friend of hers who had not arrived, and she came across the room, passing close to where the Gorhams sat. Almost Alison would have preferred her to have looked at Charles and to have smiled. That she might have forgiven. But she could not forgive the fact that she averted her eyes; and then, looking at Charles, Alison thought that he, too, was ill at ease. Pure imagination in his case, poor fellow. He knew nothing of the return of his young friend; he had n't seen her: he was listening — with his eyes only — to Mr. Gorham — looking at nothing, and if the truth were known, wondering whether should the morrow be fine he could not take both his host and hostess *en auto* to Barbizon to lunch, and escape even for half an hour with Alison into the woods.

By how many riotous Saturday nights, by how many others, was this removed from being Charles's first

supper at the Abbaye. And yet it alone was to remain in his mind. All those things that are arranged to happen happened. The waiters brought armfuls of small celluloid balls, weighted, as far as one could judge, with loose shot that made their aim eccentric; and slowly, almost bashfully at first, people began to pelt one another, beginning with their friends and acquaintances, then guests so far removed that they might be trusted not to discover their aggressors, and then their neighbours. It seemed, it was, good-humoured: it was youth, it was a certain mad happiness. Here a young and pretty matron from Milwaukee, with her dyspeptic husband regarding her with a not quite disapproving eye, was carrying on a brisk fusilade with a little Frenchman; there a cocotte, dressed and coiffed in so exquisite a manner that one would have thought that to move would spell disaster, was furiously pelting an American novelist whose Berserker rage made him forget all prudence. "He is mad," his neighbours said. With one foot on the ground, and another on his chair, he flung his missiles with a vigour that meant execution when they struck; his coat half off his back, his hair tousled, his face red, his eyes a-sparkle. He, too, like his countrywoman, had forgotten the United States! He had even forgotten Indiana.

At first Alison was hugely amused. It was all so fresh. She looked round at the different tables, at the warring groups, and she could see nothing but cheerfulness, cheerful riot, perhaps, madness, but gaiety. Charles's young girl she saw. It would seem that her friend had arrived. Was he English, or American, or

French? It was difficult to say. He was well set up, strong-faced, alert — but hard. Not the kind of man to cross, Alison thought. He was watching the scene and his young companion with indulgent eyes, taking no part, but obviously not disapproving. And yet as the fun grew more furious, less restrained, his regard was less kind, and suddenly his face clouded, and his right hand shot out to seize his companion's elbow. What he said Alison, of course, could not hear, but she seemed so much his property, so used to obedience, that she succumbed at once, sank back on the banquette, and, with a rapid sheathing of her brown eyes, turned to talk, even as she warded off the missiles that continued to find their way to so pretty a target.

And now what had been amusing became . . . Alison searched for a word, and did n't find one. She had seen etchings by Felicien Rops that came now to her mind. The beauty of the scene was gone, and a skull seemed to grimace under the gay trappings. The young matron's headdress had gone awry, her face had reddened, one shoulder was half out of her bodice; she was drunk, if not with wine, then with every evil excitement. This way and that she flung herself. Hers was complete abandonment. Away in the corner there was an English party. An oldish woman, too stupid to feel anything, her daughter, neither too young nor too stupid to be soiled, and two men — each half drunk, each crowned with a ridiculous paper cap. The girl and her two companions were growing noisier and noisier. The splendid cocotte whom Alison had seen — she and one or two of her kind — they alone, they and the waiters, seemed to

preserve their peace of mind. The waiters ran to and fro, carrying fresh armfuls of balls, fresh bottles of champagne; the cocottes did their parts with a hard merriment. It was horrible — and most horrible of all was the hard, brilliant mouths and eyes of those women who, even while they seemed to forget everything in their excitement, preserved that bitter, that calculating gaze. At least not so had the young girl been with whom Charles had awakened Alison's resentment. But she was young and soft. The rest comes, perhaps.

Gradually, however, the riot died out and people left for other restaurants, or perhaps (although less likely) for their beds. Others came, but they were not enough to stem the tide, and the room began to grow less crowded. Alison was adding impatience to disgust, and Charles looked at Mr. Gorham to see if he would n't give the signal for their departure. But Mr. Gorham was having the time of his life. Why should he stir? Besides, he had started on another bottle, and his cigar was new, — and after all, Charles was looking after his daughter. A good fellow that Caerleon.

CHAPTER IX

STILL IN THE ABBAYE AND PASSING THE TIME

CHARLES'S cup of bitterness — I say his cup of bitterness because he really was n't enjoying his evening; he liked being with Miss Gorham, but he did n't like being with Miss Gorham in the Place Pigalle — was full when it at last became evident that no ordinary means would drag Mr. Gorham from Montmartre, that he really had the courage of his programme, that, all unthinking of the stern, grey fact that it was still the depth of winter, he was set upon seeing the sun rise from Sacré Cœur.

If there is one thing more irritating than watching the antics of a drunken man on the stage, it is to read an attempted transliteration of his words on the printed page, so I will spare you Mr. Gorham's replies to his daughter's timid suggestions that she would n't be sorry now if he would pay the bill and go home. Besides, he was n't drunk. If he had been really drunk, Charles might have thought of a way out of the difficulty. He was lucid enough. He was only stubborn. "I came up here to see the sun rise and the sun rise I 'm going to see," was what he said in effect. His obstinacy betrayed itself in an absolute inability to understand that on that particular morning, according to Charles's pocket diary, the sun did n't rise till 7.29. He had it firmly fixed in his head, behind those twinkling eyes, that pink forehead,

that if directly — there was no hurry, of course — they started out and walked up the hill, they 'd arrive on the terrace in front of the new church (no, it is *not* a cathedral!) just in good time to see the towers of Notre Dame bathed in the first rays of the morning.

Charles did n't know what to do. What should he have done? He could hardly suggest to Alison that they should leave her father there and that he should take her home to the Meurice. Besides, her father would have had something to say to that. There he sat, sipping his champagne and smoking his Corona, and I don't think he'd have connived at or smiled upon any little plot that the others might wish to engineer. He did n't want to talk. But he could talk. He just wanted to be left alone for a few minutes — and then they would walk up to see the sun rise. The fresh air would do them all good — especially Alison.

And Alison seemed to know her father too well to seek to combat his plans any more. With a glance she silenced Charles, who was about to start on some fresh campaign of expostulation. As a matter of fact, one might as well talk to a Chinese idol as to this mass of pink and satisfied flesh.

"Let 's drive Miss Gorham home and then drive back to Sacré Cœur — it is n't far" — Charles did get that out.

The suggestion was not a success. "Nonsense," Mr. Gorham replied. "All this restaurant air is bad for her. She won't sleep after it. It'll do her all the good in the world to walk a little. Besides, I promised her." And he subsided again.

Obviously there was nothing else for Charles to do. There he was and there he must rest. It was all very uncomfortable, and all very stupid. Mr. Gorham did n't look the kind of man who would get any more drunk than he already was, so perhaps if they sat there he 'd begin to see reason. But sitting there and doing nothing became increasingly difficult, increasingly dull, both for Charles and for Miss Gorham. Even the riot had died away. They could n't talk because in their position and at this moment there was n't anything to talk about. Alison knew that he knew that her father had taken more wine than was good for him and was now set on folly; Charles knew that she knew that he knew. He volunteered a few remarks. Were n't that man and woman over there against the wall exactly like a Toulouse-Lautrec? Did n't she think that Yvette Guilbert would have done better to stick to the atmosphere of her first songs? Had she seen the Italian Futurists? Alison answered all his questions as in duty bound, but she did so without conviction, and the conversation languished. Nor was there much to look at. Still the little Spanish woman danced, and ran to and fro, and smacked inoffensive old gentlemen on their bald pates — to their great glee, and to the great glee of their female companions; still sang the not very attractive negro singer; still the one or two English dancers made friends. . . . They had to, poor dears. Perhaps it is n't Albert's practice — he looks generous, but in most places of the kind that young girl of nineteen who talks Lancashire, and who dances as if dancing was purely a question of acrobatics, does n't get paid anything: she is expected to wheedle

money out of the men who dance with her, or out of the people who call her to their tables and offer her a drink. That 's really a fact. One I knew got four louis one evening out of a rich and fat Australian. She showed them to me with glee! or rather she showed me the little lump they made at the side of her instep where they had slipped down inside her stocking. They 'd be safe there. She 'd tell the other girls that he was jolly mean, that he 'd only given her half a louis. If she 'd saved enough money before the summer, she intended to go back to Oldham and have a long rest. "The men always ask me the same question," she told me, "and I always answer them the same way — but I never do it — never, never, never. Madame" — Madame is the proprietor's wife — "Madame says, 'Tell them you will, and get money out of them, all you can — but don't,' and that 's what I do. Yes, they come back sometimes and are pretty mad, but I tell 'em it was a mistake, that they 'd drunk too much." There are hundreds of quite good young English girls plying that trade in that way on the Continent. Heaven looks after them, I hope.

But although in telling you this I have passed over some of the time that Charles and Miss Gorham found so tedious, I have to come back to them. There they were, and they both of them felt things were very flat, stale, and unprofitable. They had to pretend to one another to be interested in the subjects of their desultory conversation. . . . Oh, it was very dull. Alison at least would have liked to tuck her feet up, to put her head on her father's knee, and to go off to sleep. Charles did n't want to sleep, but he had a feeling that

it would only be worth rousing himself if he could brush all these belated revellers into the cold air of the Place. Faugh . . . !

At last, however, Mr. Gorham emerged from his stupor. He became brisk. Calling for the bill he rallied his young companions with a cheerful "Come along or we shall be late," and almost before they could wriggle into their coats had them outside in the dry cold of the January morning. As she left Alison had looked at the young girl who was Charles's friend. Her eyes, she saw, followed him, followed him wistfully. Alison shivered. She hoped never again to find herself in that galley — and she thought she hated Mr. Caerleon.

CHAPTER X

THE BEAUTIFUL VIEW FROM SACRÉ CŒUR

MR. GORHAM refused the services of one of those discreet carriages which, as the morning comes, take the place of the familiar taxi-autos outside the restaurants of the night. "We want to walk," he answered, all unheedful, as fathers — and husbands too — are wont to be, of Alison's satin shoes and high heels. And to walk to Sacré Cœur from the Place Pigalle is no light undertaking even in the daytime. Get yourself thoroughly out of condition by a week in Paris, eating too much, drinking too much, staying up too late, taking no exercise, and then try. But don't try at four o'clock of a winter's morning in a fur coat. Besides, it is n't supposed to be safe. On the other side of the Place Pigalle is what is popularly supposed to be the Quartier des Apaches. Other parts of Paris claim that distinction, but those steep streets that run uphill from the outer boulevard, and those narrow byways that lead to such cavernous obscurities — they most look the part. Of all this Charles had not been unmindful, but it would n't have served as an argument with Mr. Gorham, and anyhow he had always heard that the Parisian rough never attacked two men. Also he trusted to his own prowess.

Safe or dangerous, the walk is sinister. In the sunshine the road is bizarre, full for an Anglo-Saxon of

curious hints, of suggestions. In the earlier hours of the night it has a certain populous gaiety: cheerful couples emerge from the little hotels, one sees through uncurtained windows lamp-lit domestic interiors, snatches of song fill the air. But in the hours before sunrise the streets are empty. Nor cat nor dog prowls the byways. The houses are homes of mystery; their irregular roofs make an odd, disturbing pattern against the sky.

Alison was n't exactly frightened, but she was certainly nervous. Nobody had told her that her father was doing a particularly foolish thing, but all the same she had a sense that, apart altogether from the folly of humouring a stubborn man to the extent of looking for the sun three hours before it was due, the whole proceeding lacked sense, propriety, seemliness. Could n't Mr. Caerleon have stopped it? she asked herself, forgetting that she 'd discouraged his attempts. And he could n't have stopped it anyway. He could have refused to remain with them, but that was all he could have done. In that case her father would have started out with her alone, and her position would have been worse than ever. "Papa" was a very good guardian on Chestnut Street or Fifth Avenue, or even here in Paris down on the Grands Boulevards where everyone spoke English and where Messrs. Thomas Cook and Son were always just round the corner. But up here, on Montmartre, — well, it was another thing. She looked sideways at Mr. Caerleon and almost forgot her resentment in her gratitude for his presence. Anyhow, he was effective.

Alison thought these things, and Charles thought of

Alison, — and of Mr. Gorham's damn-fool obstinacy, too, a little, — and Mr. Gorham showed no signs of thinking of anything; and they all three, keeping in the middle of the street in order to avoid dustbins, plodded upwards. By the Rat which is Not Dead — although it seems to sleep — they passed, and up the Rue Houdon into the Rue des Abbesses. As the glare of the restaurant left their eyes the night seemed to grow less dark. "It's getting light already," Mr. Gorham announced. "Hurry up; we shall be late." But although they could see better, Alison did n't get any happier. The more she could see the less easy she became. Everything was very sinister. One or two people they passed looked as if they were sewer rats, and once real rats, seeming to jump up from under their feet, scuttled across the street. There was no noise, save in the distance a subdued roar which might be the movement of Paris, and, somewhere away to the left where the ascent of the hill was less steep, the noise of a motor. "I wish it would take us," Alison said; and even as she spoke, turning the corner into the Rue Radignan, her heart was frightened into her mouth by coming suddenly on two men who seemed to be waiting.

"It's nothing," said Charles. "Oh, yes, no doubt they're Apaches all right, but they're all cowards, and they would n't interfere with a party like ours." All the same he did n't easily dismiss their scowling faces from his mind, nor their attitude of expectancy. He was glad when they had put the long flight of steps which ends in that baby Place, where in the summer one drinks *bocks* outside Le Coucou, between themselves and the

possibility of trouble. At least, they were not being followed. . . . And yet, could he be mistaken? *Was* someone following them? He turned round at the last step as if to welcome the others, and looked down and away beyond the steps into the silent street beneath. The two ruffians had disappeared. He could see no one — nothing that should disquiet him. And yet, he was disquieted. It was a feeling in the pit of his stomach. Mere nervousness, he told himself. He kept wishing to look round, and would have done so if it had not been for a fear of imparting his nervousness to Alison. After all, he had good ears — and he was sure they were not being followed. But all the same. . . . They had not even a stick between them. Oh, yes; Mr. Gorham had — a rather serviceable-looking ebony cane with a heavy gold knob. Charles remembered, though, that Apaches did n't generally give you time to get to work with a walking-stick. Such thoughts were absurd. He might well be ashamed of himself.

Besides, here they were at the top of the hill, and all they had to do was to go round the shoulder of the old church, through that little Balzacian lane where small shopkeepers sell objects of piety to perspiring pilgrims, and they would be under Sacré Cœur itself. He had surely been nervous without cause. If, though, he had been with two men he would have made more sure. It was rotten, not being able to turn round.

And then — well, nothing happened. They pursued their route through the silent streets and reached the new church shining white in the starlight, and they also reached the wooden barricade which is presumably put

up for the very purpose of dissuading old fools like Mr. Gorham from endangering their precious lives and still more precious purses by coming up to look over Paris by night or to see the sun rise over the Seine. Charles could have kicked himself. Here they were: three donkeys in the starlight. He even included Alison in his denunciation. A pretty group they made. Mr. Gorham and he in fur coats and opera hats; Alison in a light opera cloak, her dress no doubt spoiled, and with her shoes certainly torn and muddied. He could have kicked himself, because he could remember now having read, not so many months ago, that very notice at which they were now staring, and which told so clearly that the gates were closed at sunset. Why, they would have a better view of Paris from the Place Pigalle or the banks of the Seine.

Charles looked at Mr. Gorham. That aged reprobate was not so easily, so quickly discouraged.

"Let 's go to the Moulin de la Galette," he said. "There 's almost as good a view from the garden there, just by the windmill, as there is from in front of the church here."

That Charles could n't stand. He felt he'd had enough of being dragged about at Mr. Gorham's heels, and, anyhow, the Moulin de la Galette was just about the last place in the world for wealthy-looking foreigners at five in the morning. "It's no use going there, Mr. Gorham; for two reasons: the first is that it's almost certain to be closed" ("Let's go and see," Mr. Gorham interpolated) — "and the second is that, even if the place is open still, not all the money in all of our pockets would

get them to open their garden at night at this time of the year. They 'll never do it. I 've tried before."

At this Mr. Gorham subsided, looked for the fiftieth time at the sky and again at the notice which explained their non-admittance. "Well, Alison, it 's getting lighter and lighter. We'll just wait. They say there when they close this darned place, but they don't say anything about keeping it closed. Why, of course, the French always get up early. The concierge" — he was getting confused — "is bound to be about directly. Why, let 's knock; let 's kick at this gate. . . ."

But these expostulations were only the last flicker of Mr. Gorham's obstinacy. True, there they all three stood, under the stars, not cold, because of their furs, but unutterably weary and foot sore — there they all stood for what seemed like another hour. Charles would have given anything to have been allowed to put his arm around Alison, to draw her cloak tighter round her throat, to give her something to lean against. Precious little good her great, fat, pink father was! It seemed an hour — but it was only a few minutes. Perhaps it was the long walk and the cold open air here on the hilltop that between them were sweeping the obstinacy out of Mr. Gorham's brain. "What's the time?" he ejaculated, and looked at his own watch. "Why, it's only just after five." And then in a minute: "Look here, I 'm not sure that you children are n't right. Why did n't you tell me again? I was forgetting it 's winter. The last time I was at the Abbaye we came up at four to see the sun rise — but then, of course, that was in April." Charles forbore to rub it in. Neither then nor at any

future time did he remind either Alison or her father that he 'd tried to convince him, with the aid of a pocket diary which bore printed witness to the fact, that even if there had been no barricade they 'd have had to sit for two hours and fifty-three minutes on the church terrace before the sun would show itself over the heights of Montparnasse.

CHAPTER XI

THE RUE LEPIC, A TAXI-AUTO, AND REAL DRAMA

COMING down from Sacré Cœur is a very different thing from going up. Not that I would advise either at five o'clock on a winter morning. One feels that one is leaving a rather strange, a very old, unusual world; that one is returning to one's own century, one's own people. One may have enjoyed oneself, but all the same — well, one is more secure, more normal, when one sees the lights of the Place Trinité.

And so it was with Charles and his friends. Oh, how they were tired! And yet they walked along briskly, even Alison forgetting her bruised feet. The Meurice had a hot bath waiting for her, and a cool bed, and there would be no need to rise on the morrow. Perhaps soon, too, — certainly when they reached the outer boulevards, — they 'd come across a taxi-auto. In the mean time the pavements were peculiarly atrocious, and as one walked down the hill one seemed to drive all one's feet into the toes of one's shoes. And to cross the street, to tread on cobbles — ah! that was a separate agony.

Soon happily the worst, the steepest, of the hill was at an end. They turned into the Rue Lepic. All the time Charles had had growing on him that sense of disquiet that he had felt an hour ago, as they had mounted the hill, and which he had lost as they reached Sacré Cœur itself. He told himself it was fancy, and yet he could n't

drive away the little fear he had. No, fear is not the word. Something in him seemed to quiver with a vague sense of following, impending calamity. Those dark walls, those depths to right and left, that pattern of mediæval roofs — they seemed mediæval at this hour — against the sky: all made for nervousness. They had given up walking in the middle of the street to save Alison's feet from the cobbles, and Charles seemed in his mind's eye to see, to be unable to shut out, their three figures, — bizarre, curious, little — making their way through cañons of mystery. The *tap-tap* of their shoes on the ground was the only sound he could hear. It had a note of ghastliness. He shook himself. He was allowing his fatigue to overcome him. His nerves did n't play him such tricks ordinarily. And here, as I say, they were in the Rue Lepic. Nothing was likely to happen to them now.

And there, surely and happily, was the light of a car coming slowly toward them. Possibly it was empty and plying for hire. Empty it certainly was, and at the raising of Charles's hand it stopped and turned as if to pick them up. But the chauffeur had underestimated the space required: his front wheels came against the edge of the pavement and he had to back again. And then the engine stopped. "Hell," Charles said to himself — not that it need mean more than a second's delay. His nerves again.

The chauffeur, off the box by now, was tinkering inside the bonnet (let me be quite frank and say that I know just about as much about a motor's mechanism as Mr. Hall Caine knows about the Derby: there is this

difference, though, — these things happened). Whatever was the matter was evidently not merely a question of turning a handle. And now Charles noticed that the chauffeur had a companion — another man sat on the box next his seat. Of course, the strike of taxi-autos was not yet at an end. The blacklegs seldom went out unaccompanied.

"It 'll be all right in a moment," the chauffeur muttered. "It's nothing: the engine's cooled. . . . Will monsieur" — and he addressed Mr. Gorham — "will monsieur not get in and sit down?" As he said this he stepped in front of Alison and Charles, perhaps to make room for Mr. Gorham to get to the door, perhaps to prevent their all getting in. Charles did n't pretend to be very clear-headed just then. It did n't seem unnatural that Mr. Gorham should be given the precedence: he was old and fat. If they all got in, it might tire the machine. I don't say he thought this, but he was n't in a mood to argue about trifles, and in any case he'd rather Mr. Gorham got in and left him on the pavement with Alison. So Mr. Gorham did get in, and the chauffeur closed the door and returned to his machinery.

What happened next Charles owed to a lucky accident. The man on the box shifted his position ever so little, and as a result the light from a near-by lamp fell full on his face. An extraordinary face for a chauffeur's companion, Charles could n't help thinking. Not a Latin face. But more than this Charles saw: the man's lips wreathed themselves at this moment into a curious, mocking, triumphant smile. All his fears came back. He remembered in a flash having read only yesterday

of taxi-cab robberies in New York. He felt there was some game on, and his fatigue fell away from him, his muscles grew taut. . . .

Not a moment too soon. At the second almost that the smile of the other man had put him on his guard the engines began to race. Slapping the bonnet down, the chauffeur turned quickly and made to leap into his seat. In another moment the car would have been started, and Charles and Alison would have been left on the pavement, and Mr. Gorham would have been halfway down the Rue Lepic. Charles's arm shot out. Seizing the Frenchman by the shoulder he spun him round, and then before he could recover himself had flung him against the lamp-post.

"Open the door, quick," he cried to Alison. "Jump out, Mr. Gorham: they're trying to kidnap you!" he added in a shout; and then, thinking it best to act first and explain afterwards (remember, all this took the smallest fraction of a minute to complete), he jumped himself on the footboard and pushed his fist with all his force into the face of the second man. Ah, he was an easy mark. Back he fell off his seat into the street at the other side of the car. Forgetting the chauffeur, Charles ran round: the man might have fallen only; he might mean mischief.

He certainly had meant mischief. He lay on his back. Whether he was stunned with the blow, or whether in falling he had struck his head, Charles did n't know; but what he did know was, that in one hand was a revolver — one of those peculiarly vicious-looking little American revolvers that promise to go off for the mere malice of

the thing. He must have had his fingers on it all the time. And as he lay there, his face looked as if he would have used it had Charles been just one second slower. Charles bent over him . . .

"*Mr. Caerleon!*"

It was Alison's voice that rang out, and in a flash Charles realised that he 'd forgotten all about the chauffeur. *He* had n't been stunned. He had only been flung away from the machine. Charles leapt to his feet, and, even as he did so, the car bounded forward, and almost before he realised what was happening, it was gone, careering down the street at its full speed. But, thank Heaven! both Alison and Mr. Gorham were safe: nothing was the matter with them.

A glance at the man who had been on the box showed that he was still unconscious (Charles had satisfied himself that nothing worse had happened to him than to be stunned), and Charles turned to his companions.

"It 's all right," Mr. Gorham assured him. "I jumped out quick enough when Alison here opened the door and I heard your shout. But I 've got to thank you again, Caerleon. I don't know what we should do without you. You 've helped us twice. Heaven knows what those infernal scoundrels would have done with me if they 'd got off. I suppose they thought that, as I was the oldest, and fattest, I should be the one with the bank-roll. But let 's look at the man down there; I hope he is n't really hurt."

Charles reassured him, but Mr. Gorham wanted to have a look for himself, and while Charles talked to Alison, who was a little shaken now that the incident and

the danger were at an end, he went to the fallen figure that lay like a corpse half across the street.

It was a very natural and normal Mr. Gorham whom Charles had seen when, the car vanishing, he had turned to learn about and to congratulate him on his escape — a Mr. Gorham entirely restored to sense and sanity. But it seemed to Charles that, in the moment of examining the man who lay in the street, he altered: the pinkness of his face became grey, the flesh seemed to fall away. Perhaps, as with Miss Gorham, the incident was having its effect now — now when the excitement was at an end. Even elderly American gentlemen are not in the habit of being kidnapped. It is the sort of thing to give one a nasty jar. Anyhow, when Mr. Gorham straightened himself up he seemed shaken, older, shocked in some way. At the moment Charles paid little attention to the alteration or to the way in which Mr. Gorham spoke, more thickly, more excitedly than was his wont.

"Look here! We can't leave this man here. He 's not really hurt, as you say, but we can't just prop him up against a wall and go away. We 'd better give him in charge. I 'll tell you: you and Alison walk down the hill: you'll find plenty of gendarmes where they 're not wanted in the Place Blanche. I 'll stop here and look after him. Yes, I 'll be safe enough. He won't move. And the other man 's got his car down in the Place de la Concorde by now. Come back with a gendarme as quick as you can."

So as Mr. Gorham seemed to have taken things in hand, to have assumed control, and as he was evidently

used to giving orders, Charles did as he was told, and took Miss Gorham down the hill. But even in the Place Blanche it took a little while to find any assistance. The men who were about were n't exactly the kind to call upon for help. They looked at the couple curiously, and Alison shrank closer to Charles, who had had to support her as it was. She had been more upset than she had thought. Not unnaturally.

Indeed, before they could find a gendarme they had to walk all the way to the Place Pigalle, where one sleepy-looking uniform was presiding over the arrival and departure of the last belated revellers, and where still a few autos waited outside the Abbaye, the Pigalle, and the Royal. And even when they had found him, it was some minutes before he could be made to understand what they wanted, that there was really something vital for him to do. He did n't look at Alison at all, and he hardly looked at Charles. I suppose he summed up all young people who walked about Montmartre in evening clothes at half-past five in the morning as of exactly the same kind. They were n't likely to be serious. No, indeed!

After a while, however, Charles did get him to see sense and to come with them; but in the mean time their conversation — obviously not a mere asking of the time of day — had attracted attention, and when they started again up the Rue Houdon they were followed by as unsavoury a collection of riff-raff as it is possible to imagine. Charles begged him to hurry. He would n't. The majesty, the deliberation of the law was in this its representative.

While they had been looking for help, Alison had been reasonably self-possessed and calm, very tired but assured, but now they had found it she became full of fears and nervous. Would they be in time? They had been away so long. "Not nearly as long as you think," Charles answered. "And, besides, what can have happened? Nothing. The man, even if he had come round, would n't be in a position to do any harm. I 'd trust your father to look after him — besides, your father 's got the revolver."

"Yes, but the motor-car may have come back; there may have been others. How about those men whom we met as we were going up?"

"Dear Miss Gorham, there is n't really any cause for anxiety. And here we are, anyway" — and they turned into the Rue Lepic.

Charles was right: there was n't any cause for anxiety. There where they had left him stood Mr. Gorham; but he was alone. Charles was astonished. He could have sworn that the man whom he had knocked down would n't have been in a fit case to walk away in so short a time, to say nothing of being able to get away from anyone who had such good reason as Mr. Gorham had for wishing to keep him.

"What happened?" he asked.

Mr. Gorham seemed rather ashamed of himself. He answered rather shamefacedly, Charles thought. "Nothing happened, and that 's just the reason why he 's got away. You see, when you did n't come back, I began to think that possibly something had happened to *you*, so I pulled the poor devil on to the sidewalk — I could

n't leave him in the road to be run over — and walked to the corner there to see whether you were n't coming, and I stood there a minute or two, and when I turned round the fellow was n't there. That's all I know."

Charles began to press for more information, but the gendarme was getting impatient. This conversation had been carried on in English, and what he wanted to know was what had happened to the body he was to find in the road up here and to cover himself with glory by arresting and taking off to the *poste*. Not every arrest makes itself easily in this part of the world. "What 's all this?" he asked. "I thought you said I 'd find a thief here. Where 's your thief? Is this all a game?"

Mr. Gorham's scanty French was not equal to the task of discussing the matter; he hardly understood what was being asked, and he was so obviously ill at ease, and they were all finding the proximity of the dozen or so hangers-on from the Place Pigalle at once so uncomfortable and so menacing, that Charles took charge and cut the matter short.

"It is simple," he assured the guardian of the law. "While I and this young lady were looking for your brave assistance, the man who 'd attacked us came to his senses and stole away while this gentleman was there at the corner looking for our arrival. But all the same, I 'm very sorry to have disturbed you. Look" — and he slipped into the gendarme's hands a couple of louis. "And now" — for he saw at once there was to be no more trouble — "can't you get us free of this rabble? Do you think we could get a taxi-auto?"

The gendarme responded by sending one of the crowd-

ing ruffians running down the hill to the boulevard, and the party of four followed him, followed in their turn by the rabble, who were not so easily to be shaken off. "I wonder they don't try to do us in," said Mr. Gorham. "They look equal to it."

Soon came a taxi-auto, a perfectly normal and ordinary cab this one, Charles assured himself; and putting Mr. Gorham in first (he was afraid that if he put Alison in first the car might make off with her out of pure devilry), he handed in the daughter and, flinging five francs to the crowd, he himself followed, telling the chauffeur to drive to the Meurice, and wondering the while what could have happened to enable their assailant to get so clean away. It was n't the first time he 'd seen a man knocked out, and he knew quite well that whoever he was he had n't got away without assistance. Well, anyhow, it was jolly lucky that the scoundrel's friends had satisfied themselves with helping him; with a little more enterprise they might have cleared up Mr. Gorham while they were about it.

Mr. Gorham himself did n't seem comfortable. Certainly he was n't communicative. He turned to Alison with ponderous facetiousness: "Well, we have n't seen the sun rise after all, my dear. We 'll have to put it off till the spring. The next time, though, we 'll bring half a dozen policemen with us."

"I think, Papa, it 'd be more to the point to bring Mr. Caerleon . . ." And then Alison broke down. Sitting next to her father she hid her face in his coat, and sobbed and sobbed. And no wonder, thought Charles, who had the sense to know that the crying portended no

terrible thing. To dine, and to go to the Théâtre Moderne, and to be kept for hours in that infernal Abbaye, to be dragged up the hill, and then on top of it all to have their last adventure — well, it would have been strange if Alison had n't broken down. But, nevertheless, although his brain told him there was nothing in the girl's sobbing to worry about, yet worry he did: it made him acutely miserable; . . . and for the first time he realised that he had more than a liking for Alison, that he loved her, that, if by hook or crook he could have his way, his bachelor life was at an end.

But here they almost were. Swinging round the corner into the Rue d'Alger, they would be at the Meurice in a few seconds. "Alison, dear, we 're at the hotel," Mr. Gorham proclaimed — and at once the girl was herself again. As she passed into the light of the doorway, Charles saw that her eyes were red, and, oh, so tired, but she looked at him and smiled — more than smiled, he dared to think. And so he left them. "Come in to-morrow — to-day, I mean — at tea-time," Mr. Gorham said; "we 've got to thank you yet."

Charles walked back to the Chatham. His head wanted cooling, though his feet were sore. The doors he passed were being opened, people were already beginning to appear, and — yes, there over the roofs was the first sign of that dawn that Mr. Gorham had searched in vain.

The sleepy porter at the hotel let him in — not for the first time had he known Mr. Caerleon come in so late; and saying that he wanted his coffee at ten, Charles went to bed — to dream, and to toss from side to side

with a nightmare in which he seemed to be careering in a cinematograph motor-car up and down the heights of Montmartre, over roofs, windmills, and churches, driven by a chauffeur with a mocking smile, who guided the car with one hand while with the other he menaced him with a revolver. And by his side in the car sat Alison, and opposite them were Mr. Gorham and a young girl in a little dark blue turban from which at the most provocative angle flowered a white aigrette.

CHAPTER XII

MR. GORHAM EXPLAINS

CONSIDERING that he was not in bed till seven o'clock, Charles responded very readily to the waiter's call at ten (why is it that one needs so little sleep in Paris?), and having drunk his coffee and eaten his roll, — the *croissant* he rejected in fear of his figure, — he bathed, dressed with more than usual care, and went out to find sunshine in the streets and a laughing gaiety that, even had there been no Alison, would have made him glad that he was alive.

Charles was one of those happy people who, while they have in themselves some fund of cheerfulness on which at moments when other people would be depressed they can draw at will, yet answer at once to any call of good fortune. In other words, his was a nature refractory to depression, but immediately respondent to a ray of sunshine, a good claret, the smile of a pretty woman, a beautiful passage in a painting, a well-cut skirt. Other things had the same effect, of course.

This morning, as he could n't very well, having been told to come at tea-time, go to inquire after Miss Gorham, — who 'd be asleep anyhow, he hoped, — Charles carried out his usual morning practice. First he was shaved under the Regina Hotel, because it was one of the few places in Paris in which they would at least try to give one an American hot towel; then to the florist

opposite the Grand, where he grumbled at having to pay two francs for a carnation; then, not out of viciousness, but from pure lightness of heart, to the bar of his hotel for a Rose cocktail. Next he felt it necessary, and perhaps it would be amusing, to go to Bernheim's to see those Italian Futurists whom he had been asking Alison about the night before. Having been, he knew it had been unnecessary, but it had certainly been amusing. Finally, as there was still a little while before he would care for lunch, in a cab to the Louvre to see the Frieze of the Archers, the hare, the gun, and the lobster of Delacroix in the Moreau Collection, — "A good bag that!" he thought, — the sad space where the Gioconda was, and the giant Courbet. The choice was characteristic of Charles's tastes, and it was also characteristic of him that he had to do an intolerable deal of walking to get from one of these objects to another. And getting to them, he did n't bother about what was on the right or on the left. Such was his way.

Then lunch; but although it would amuse me to tell you where he had it and what he had, yet I 've mentioned too many restaurants to make another excusable, and anyhow Charles's mind was not set on eating just then: at least, he was not thinking of lunch, but of tea. But wherever it was, he sat a very long time over his coffee and cigar, trying to kill time. So slowly moved the hands of his watch! At last, impatient, he sent a chasseur to his hotel for his fur coat, took a taxi-auto, and went for a drive all by himself in the Bois. The fading sunshine helped his mood. He called over to himself all the three times he had seen Alison, what he had thought when he

saw her first, what she had worn each time, what she had said to him, all the things trivial or great that had happened in their acquaintanceship. He had forgotten entirely that feeling of being in the cold which had followed his temporary departure from the table last night. Too many things had followed it for him to remember that one solitary event which might have depressed him. And then, having thought of all these things, he began to make plans. . . . But he 'd forgotten to telegraph to his man! Good heavens, how could he have been so stupid! Very likely his man was convinced by now that his master was dead; perhaps the police of Monaco were even now circulating his description. I 'd overlooked the necessity of telling you that Charles, when a couple of evenings before he had left the Café des Trois Vertus and had hastened to the Gare de Lyon, had just succeeded in seeing the tail of the train for Monte Carlo vanish into the darkness. The programme that Charles had made had been carried out as far as it lay in his man's power, but, not finding his master in the compartment that had been engaged, he had been passive: perhaps Mr. Caerleon was talking to a friend in some other carriage. And so now luggage and man were seven hundred miles away, and Charles himself was managing without any clothes to speak of, doing without assistance, and chafing under the necessity of having to wear a ready-made shirt and collar.

Charles could n't even be sure where his man was. Would he have the sense to go to the Paris at Monte Carlo? And if he was n't there, where would he be? Luckily, Charles had retained his own ticket and the

luggage receipt. To the telegraph office, then, to send a telegram to tell the man to wait instructions. Perhaps he would get it. There was the problem of the address. Would the man ask for letters in his own name or his master's? He compromised it by addressing it "Caerleon (for his valet Bowles), Hôtel de Paris, Monte Carlo." Short of going to Monte Carlo himself, that was the best he could do.

The drive and the sending of the telegram had taken up time. It was now four o'clock, and Charles felt that he could at last with propriety go to look for the Gorhams at the Meurice. Indeed, they were waiting for him. Mr. Gorham, a little unlike the man whom Charles felt he now knew so well, still a little shaken, a little less pink; Alison, the same as ever, only more so — more beautiful, more charming, in a dress, of course, that Charles had n't seen before. Yes, she acknowledged that she still felt a little tired, but that was n't the result of the excitement, — that was nothing to be tired about,— but of the walking and of the stopping up to such an unearthly hour. Then, naturally, they fell to discussing their adventure. Charles brought the subject up and kept it there as long as he could, not for his own aggrandisement, but because to discuss the dangers they had shared seemed to bring him closer to, into more intimate relationship with, Alison, to turn him into an old friend. Mr. Gorham started by being full of the most effusive thanks to Charles, but having rendered them he seemed to wish to avoid the subject. His daughter, though, enjoyed too much fighting her battles over again to be willing to be put off.

"What irritates me, as I 've been telling Papa, Mr. Caerleon, is not so much that we were attacked, but that that man should have got away. I 'm glad generally if a thief does n't get caught, but I do think that pair were the limit. Heaven only knows what they 'd have done with Papa when they 'd gone through his pockets and discovered he 'd only got pearl studs, a gold watch, and perhaps five hundred dollars. Perhaps they 'd have held him to ransom like the Gioconda. 'Loss of a great picture and of a great American citizen. Is it a plot?' Can't you see it on the bills, Mr. Caerleon? Oh, but, Papa, why did n't you stick to him?"

As I say, Mr. Gorham had every appearance of being sick of the whole matter, and in consequence, although Charles played up, Alison's prattle fell rather flat. "You stayed up too late last night, Papa. That 's why you 're grumpy. Well, I 'm so tired that I guess I 'll ask Mr. Caerleon to excuse me. Don't forget to arrange with him to spend a respectable evening with us to-morrow." And, laughing happily, she went away.

"I 'm glad she 's gone, Caerleon. I want to talk to you. It 's fair to explain to you about last night. But we can't talk here: it 's too big and not quiet enough. And we can't talk upstairs: my room is next to Alison's, and so 's the sitting-room, and she 'd hear us and wonder what I was being so serious about. Let 's go somewhere else."

Charles knew where the somewhere else would be. He had learnt Mr. Gorham's habits. He knew the type. He doubted whether they 'd be able to talk any better in the discreet bar in the side street near the Opéra to which Mr. Gorham now took him, and where, if the truth is

told, Charles was already sufficiently well known. Too many pretty ladies came in and out, and sat at high stools and drank curiously coloured liquids through straws. Too many thick-necked Frenchmen with their hats shoved well to the back of their heads sat and wrote notes which they sent off by chasseurs. The Meurice was the quieter atmosphere. Still, Mr. Gorham preferred the bar — and so once had Charles.

Arrived, Mr. Gorham found a corner as far removed as possible from the rest of the guests, and he and Charles, sitting down, ordered whiskies and sodas. Evidently Mr. Gorham had something on his mind; he was n't here for a mere chat. He had spoken of "explaining" — and he evidently had something to explain. He was nervous, and his hands and eyes showed it.

"Look here, Caerleon; tell me. Did you notice anything particular about those men last night?"

"No — nothing particular. They seemed pretty smart. They almost got you. Their plan was a good one."

"Yes, but did you look at the men themselves? Did anything strike you about either of them?"

"Now you ask me, I remember that I did notice that the one I knocked down and who afterwards escaped looked an odd fish to be in that galley. He looked more like an Englishman or an American than a Frenchman, and he did n't look the criminal type."

"Well, he is n't. He 's a man I know — no, not to speak to, but well enough by sight. An American. That 's what upset me. Perhaps you saw it gave me rather a shock. They wanted to kidnap me all right, but it was n't for the sake of what I might have in my pockets,

and it was n't to hold me for ransom as Alison suggested. No, the idea was to get me away and to keep me out of things for a week or so. I don't know whether I told you, but I came over here as a rest after the deuce of a fight in Wall Street. I practically cleared up — well, it does n 't matter how much, but it was a pile, and I squeezed pretty badly half a dozen men who don't like being squeezed, and who generally try to get even, when anyone interferes with their plans. That 's why when I got them where I wanted them I came over here. It was a stock deal, of course, — railways. All I had to do was to sit tight and things would come more and more my way. Of course, I get news every day — twice a day at least I get a cable from my agent, and then I tell him what to do. If he ceased getting instructions from me he 'd do nothing; he would n't know what to do. Only Cyrus Gorham knows that. Well, if they 'd tied me up somewhere where I could n't get news and could n't send any instructions, all my work would crumble away. They 'd soon have me where I 've got them now. Do you see? Of course, it was only a forlorn chance. Even Old Man Pyle would ordinarily draw the line at kidnapping."

"Kidnapping! — well, it looked to me as if they would n't draw the line at murder. What was the man doing with a revolver?"

"And here it is, too," said Mr. Gorham, folding his coat back a little so as to show the stock of a pistol in his breast-pocket. "I took it out of his hand just after you left me with him last night. I've drawn the cartridges, of course."

"Well, it's a souvenir of the evening, anyway."

"It 's more than that, my boy." Mr. Gorham was warming up. "It 's evidence! Each of these revolvers has a number, and I dare say if I want to when I get back I 'll be able to prove that this was bought by or belonged to one of Old Man Pyle's gang. That 'd help some."

Charles, naturally, was more than interested; he was astonished. Of course, he knew that there were plenty of Americans ready to accuse some of their fellow-countrymen of being "malefactors of great wealth," and he knew that it was on record that some of the present-day financiers had n't stuck at trifles in making their fortunes; but then that was in America itself. Kidnapping, and indeed murder, formed part of the programme of the San Francisco grafters — but somehow an Englishman thinks of San Francisco as a place outside the law, full of picturesque ruffians from the novels of Stevenson and Frank Norris. Europe, Paris, was different; such things could n't happen here, at home.

"Could n't they?" Mr. Gorham answered to his doubts. "Anything can happen anywhere if you 've got enough money to pay for it. Old Man Pyle's got less than he had before he met me, but he 's got enough left to put across a little job like this. Besides, the man you knocked down is in with him — one of his crowd; he did n't have to find or square him. Tim Gilder has enough at stake on his own account."

Charles, in spite of the fact that he existed more or less beautifully on an income which he did not earn, and habitually exceeded, had a practical mind. "What are

you going to do about it?" he asked. He foresaw that this conversation might go on till dinner-time if he did n't get down to brass tacks (an Americanism, of course); and the future always interested him more than the past.

"What am I going to do about it? Why, nothing. What is there to do?"

"Well, I don't see that the friends of your 'Old Man Pyle' are going to be satisfied with one failure. Why, we have n't even set the police on them. And that reminds me . . . That man getting away . . . Did you —?"

"Yes, I did. I let him go. Directly I went over and looked at him — mind you, I never thought till then, for a single second, that the whole thing was more than a common, simple robbery! I recognised Tim Gilder, and that 's why I sent you away. I don't know him, but I know something about his wife and kids. I guess I can look after myself, whether Gilder 's in the pen or out of it. Oh, yes. I know it was pretty foolish, but I thought of them; and then, too, I thought of the row there 'd be, the scandal. Lord! they might keep Alison and me hanging about Paris for months over the affair. I can just see the American papers. No, I 'm not looking for fame this journey."

"I can understand all that," Charles answered; "but what I want to know is what you 're going to do in the future, how you 're going to protect yourself to-day and to-morrow? They nearly got you last night. They would have got you if it had n't been for a lucky accident" ("If it had n't been for you, my boy!" Mr. Gor-

ham ejaculated); "and perhaps if you 're not jolly careful they 'll get you next time."

"No, I don't think. I will be jolly careful. They shan't get my hide so easily as all that. I 'll tell you what it is, Caerleon. I 've had a bit of a fright, and I made up my mind this morning, before I went to sleep, that I would n't go out after dark while I 'm in Paris, or while this matter 's still open, and I 'll be careful where I go in the daytime too."

"Well, Mr. Gorham, you know your own business best. I don't want to seem impertinent, but if I were you I 'd add about a hundred per cent to the degree of carefulness that you seem to think sufficient. I 'd always have somebody with me. I don't know whether you 've got any friends in Paris."

"Loads my boy. There 's a bunch round at the Ritz now. But I 'm not a baby wanting a nurse; I can't go and ask them to keep with me. They 'd think I was mad. If I told 'em the reason, the whole thing, p'raps they would n't believe me —and if they did, ten to one they 'd fight shy at the idea of butting in on Old Man Pyle's game."

"Well, you seem to be a nice cheerful lot of companions-in-arms in New York, I must say. Still, I 'm not afraid of your 'Old Man Pyle.' He can't do anything to me. And I don't think I 'm much afraid of your other man — Gilder 's his name, is n't it? — either. We 've got his revolver! So count on me, Mr. Gorham. I 'll look after you when you want me. You 've seen I 'm not such a bad bodyguard."

"Well, that 's real good of you, Caerleon, and I 'm

going to take you at your word. I 'll get you to walk back to the hotel with me now, and I want you to take dinner with us to-morrow night. Where did Alison tell me to say? Oh, I know — Paillard's. Eight o'clock. We won't go painting the town red afterwards: I 'll go home and lock all three of my bedroom doors."

"You mention Miss Gorham. Does she know about all this?"

"No, sir. Not on your life. Alison spends money; she don't know anything about the way it 's got. Why, if I told her all about Old Man Pyle, and Gilder, and that bunch, she 'd get real upset, as likely as not. No, I 'm going to rely on you all you let me, and I 'll take care of myself, but — well, not a word to Alison."

"Perhaps you know best, Mr. Gorham. I 'd have thought, though, that if Miss Gorham is even possibly to have again the kind of adventure she had last night, she ought to know what it 's all about. It prepares her, anyway."

"Yes, but we shan't have any more excitements like that. Now I know that they 're after me to this extent I intend to keep in my hole. They can't dig me out at the Meurice. Besides, the affair will be at an end in a fortnight or so. . . ."

Mr. Gorham seemed to think the subject had been sufficiently discussed. After all, from his point of view, it was simple. All he had to do was to sit tight, to be sensible, to stick to the main streets and daylight. True, it was dark now, but he had Charles with him. It was a pretty clever kidnapper who 'd manage the two of them in the Avenue de l'Opéra at six o'clock in the evening.

All the same, as they went out of the bar Charles looked round with a nervous interest. There were the usual half-dozen semi-private motors; one or two hangers-on seemed to belong to the atmosphere, and could n't by any stretch of imagination be translated into criminals sent from Wall Street. Charles was almost disappointed. If you do find yourself involved in a plot of this kind it 's more fun to have it thick and slab. He did n't know that both the American detective and the American criminal did their "watching" in too intelligent a manner to be caught so easily.

And so, soberly, quietly, without incident, they walked back to the Meurice. Nothing occurred to excite Charles's mind. He even made a little experiment. They were passing the shop of the excellent Monsieur Kleinberger, which, as you know, is only a few doors round the corner from the avenue. Charles stopped Mr. Gorham, under the pretence of being interested in an Early Dutch picture. But he was really looking over his right shoulder at the passers-by in the avenue, and at the people who turned into the Rue de l'Echelle itself. Nobody passed, and nobody came — at least, nobody who took the slightest interest in either Mr. Gorham or his companion.

Leaving Mr. Gorham at his hotel, Charles thought to himself that it was just possible that his elderly American friend suffered from hallucinations. He remembered that there was a disease known as the mania of persecution.

CHAPTER XIII

PERHAPS MISS GORHAM HAS PNEUMONIA

CHARLES was letting things get by him. He, who had n't intended to stop in Paris at all, had been in that happy city for two nights and two days, and he had neither plans nor clothes, neither business nor actual occupation. To kill time in a place like Paris, if you are looking forward to some hour or day, is rather worse than being on a treadmill. Here he was, with an engagement for dinner at eight o'clock the next day — just twenty-five hours off — and he was thrashing his brain as to how he was to spend the time that must pass. Paris is a place that requires, demands, the whole heart of its votary. Charles had no longer a whole heart to give it. . . .

He looked at his Baedeker; he looked at certain notes he had made in his diary. There were all sorts of people, at the Embassy and elsewhere, he might go and see, but he did n't want to see them. How was he to account for his delay in going South? He had n't seen the Cluny Museum for a long time: he might go there in the morning, and in the afternoon he might brave the rugosities of Monsieur Vollard's temperament, and see whatever Cezannes, Picassos, and Gauguins that amiable dealer would show him; then the Galeries Durand-Ruel were always good for an hour or so. But these were for tomorrow. Characteristically he solved the difficulty.

Remembering that he 'd only slept for a couple of hours on the previous night, and not wanting to dress, he walked quickly down to the Tour d'Argent, had a *barbue Housman*, an *entrecôte Bordelaise*, some Brie, and a bottle — a whole bottle — of Corton, and then, having secured beforehand, in spite of the strike, a taxi, drove straightway to his hotel. By nine o'clock he was in bed, and by nine-five he was asleep, and he was still asleep the next morning at eight o'clock, when, as usual, he had commanded his coffee. And let me hasten to add that with his coffee came a little blue folded paper, with a typewritten telegraphic message from the good Bowles: "am here sir have no money can't get luggage obediently bowles." For the moment, however, the telegram got no attention.

The truth was that, although Charles did n't know it, all through the previous evening, and through all the hours since he had left Mr. Gorham, his mind had been working at one problem. What was he to do about Alison? And suddenly, at eleven o'clock, when he was conscientiously carrying out his time-killing programme, and examining with absent-minded appreciation the manifold beauties of the Cluny, light came to him. He must tell Mr. Gorham. He left the place more quickly than he had entered it. At the Taverne Lorraine he found ink and paper: —

Dear Mr. Gorham, — I am to have the pleasure of dining with you this evening, but I wish I might have a talk with you first. There 's a good deal I want to say connected, directly and indirectly, with what you told

me yesterday. I wish you 'd send me a note to the Chatham to say if we can't meet at four o'clock.

Yours very sincerely,

CHARLES CAERLEON.

A disingenuous note. You see, Charles did n't want her father to show it to Alison, and perhaps, after all, it was n't so entirely unfair to say that what he wanted to talk about bore "directly and indirectly" on the subject of Mr. Gorham's revelations. By twenty past eleven the letter was on its way, and at two o'clock Charles was back at the Chatham. What if Mr. Gorham, anxious to make the most of the daylight hours, had been out? No, an answer was there: —

MY DEAR MR. CAERLEON [the use of the "My" is peculiarly American], — Alison is in bed: we shall have to dine alone. So I dare say what you have to say — and I know it will be worth while listening to — will wait till we meet at eight at Paillard's. No — perhaps, after the lecture you read me, you won't mind fetching me. I feel like a baby who can't be allowed out without a nurse! I 'll expect you at 7.45. I 've ordered dinner.

Yours very faithfully,

CYRUS GORHAM.

P.S. — I'm sure you'll be reassured to hear that I 've put the cartridges back in that revolver.

P.P.S. — There is n't anything really the matter with Alison. She knows I 'm writing to you, and sends you her messages.

Now, this was all very well, but it was very much calculated to disturb Charles's equanimity, and to fan his growing passion. In one way, it was no disadvantage to be able to talk to Mr. Gorham rather over a dinner-table than in the troubled atmosphere of some shady café. But Charles had been so greatly looking forward to seeing Alison again. . . . Why, he had hardly spoken to her since that adventurous night! And, again, she was ill. What illness might not have attacked a young girl exposed to the cold breezes of a Parisian early morning? Bronchitis. Pneumonia. If there was n't "anything really" the matter with her, why did n't she dine with them, if not at Paillard's, then in the repose of her own hotel?

However, thinking cures no such evil. There was eight o'clock to wait for.

CHAPTER XIV

THE AMIABLE CHARLES DECLARES HIS SUIT

MR. GORHAM at dinner was cheery enough. Evidently he had recovered his balance. He talked with enthusiasm about Paris, about New York, about the kind of thing Alison and he would next do to amuse themselves. The confidences of the evening before had evidently loosened the strings of his mind. He was more disposed to treat Charles as a friend, as someone he had known longer than for the two or three days since first they had actually met. He explained a good deal of the operations he had been engaged on in New York, the affair that had disturbed the equanimity of his "Old Man Pyle" — but, he explained with reservations. Whether he was a "bull" or a "bear," and on which particular railway he was exercising his talents for speculation — these ultimate facts he kept to himself. Nor was Charles very curious to learn. He would have preferred to think that Mr. Gorham's activity was constructive, but it was a great thing to know that it was successful. All this enterprising American had to say was interesting: he made things live. Charles, who had a reader's knowledge of Wall Street, — the kind of knowledge you get from reading the "Saturday Evening Post," Edwin Lefevre, and Will Payne, — began to feel that he understood the place at last. Stock Exchange gambling was not much to his taste. Hardly

could he recall any flutter in stocks and shares in London. But Wall Street was so dramatic, so picturesque, so romantic even. The people all stood out so vividly —

"But now, my dear young friend," — Mr. Gorham was wont to become both paternal and familiar after a good meal, — "what new advice have you got to give me? I 'm listening to all that comes. Perhaps I 'll take it. You seem to me to have a head-piece, and that, if I may say so without offence, is more than most young Englishmen seem to have. What I like about you is that you 're a live wire, and you don't get flurried. A useful man in a scrap!"

They had dined well. Charles not only ordered good dinners himself, but he was the cause of good dinners in others. With him as guest, somehow or other, even the most careless host did n't push the *carte* across the table, as if to say, "Order what you like: *I* shall have steak-and-kidney pudding." There was something about his attitude as he sat at table that suggested that he expected to lunch or dine as the case might be, and not simply to feed. Mr. Gorham had realised that. He had shown a proper appreciation of his position, and, with the tactful assistance of the *maître d'hôtel*, had, as we have seen, ordered the dinner beforehand. Now they had reached the coffee.

"What new advice have you to give me?" That is what Mr. Gorham had asked — and, of course, Charles had no new advice to give either to Mr. Gorham or to anyone else. Rather was he seeking advice, guidance, encouragement. However, there it was: Mr. Gorham, by his questions, had brought the conversation down to

brass tacks. Charles could n't very well bring it back to a discussion of the possibilities of a coal strike in England, or to an indictment of the New York customs-house. He either had to offer some new advice — or he had to come to his own business. He was n't happy; his mouth was dry. Excusing himself for a moment, he went out through the little lobby on to the boulevard, and sought courage and inspiration of the fresh air and of the twinkling lights. But in vain. Returning, still his mouth was dry, still his courage was to seek. . . .

"Mr. Gorham, I 've given you all the advice I 've got to give. I hope it 's all right: it 's what I think is best — but I want to talk about something more important than that, more important to me —"

"Well, I do like that!" Mr. Gorham ejaculated.

"Yes, more important to me, and I do think more important to you. It is n't altogether my fault. It 's chance, perhaps. But, anyhow, fate has thrown me the last few days very much in your daughter's company, and I — I love her. No — I know what you want to ask. You want to know if I 've told her. I have n't. I 'll tell you why." Charles was thoroughly wound up now. He had to go ahead. He wanted to get out what he had to say before he was interrupted. He just could n't let Mr. Gorham butt in. "I did n't tell her, because — well, because, perhaps, up to the present I have n't had much chance, and because I did think I ought to tell you first. If you object — well, I don't know what I shall do, but I want you not to object. I want you to listen to me." Mr. Gorham was listening right enough: there was no mistake about that. "I thought I ought to tell you first,

because — well, just because you are — well, you 're an American and rich like all Americans, and you may want Miss Gorham" — he was almost saying "Alison," but he choked the name back — "to marry a title and a man perhaps as rich as herself. I have n't got a title, and I 'm not rich, — but you do know something about my people, and it happens you 've had a good many opportunities of knowing me: I 've not got a title and I 've not got much money, but mine *is* a family. I know my brother would approve. And as for the money — well, I 've got some, and though, of course, I have n't done much work up to the present, there is n't any reason why I should n't . . ."

But Mr. Gorham's patience was exhausted. He wanted to talk a little himself now. He could n't wait, in fact.

"Hold hard, Caerleon. Don't go so fast. You 've not told Alison, you say. So much the better. I respect you for it. Most of the hundred or so young men — American and French and Austrian and God knows what — who 've wanted to marry her have n't been so considerate. But let 's consider your proposition. You must n't take offence. Let 's deal with your last remark first. There is n't any reason why you should n't work, you say. I wonder. I 'm not so sure. How old are you? I remember: thirty-three. Well, if self-respect has n't made you go out and do something by now, I don't quite see how you 're going to begin. Yes. I know Alison is an inducement. But I 'm not offering Alison as a reward to idle young Englishmen for working hard at making a couple of thousand dollars a year. That 's not my way.

How much more do you think you 'd be able to make? Not much, I 'm afraid. And now, let 's take your other points. You have n't a title. But don't make any mistake there, Caerleon: I set Alison's happiness far away above titles. No dukes for Cyrus Gorham — unless a duke happens along that Alison really and truly wants for his own sake. All the same, a title and no money is better than no title and no money. If a man is a duke or an earl and does n't do any work — well, I don't know that one can exactly blame him. He 's up against it. I should think he 'd find it rather difficult to get people to take him seriously if he wanted to work. But if a man 's like you, and he does n't do any work — well, he 's a — well, he 's a man who does n't want to do any, and who is n't likely to begin." Mr. Gorham paused, and clapped his hands. The waiter appeared. "Bring me the paper out of my overcoat pocket — number 8," he said.

The paper was brought — a New York "Sun."

"Now, look here. This came in while I was dressing. Listen: —

"It is known that the father of Miss Rolker did not at first look with favour on the Prince's suit. He liked the nobleman as a friend, but as a son-in-law — that was different. The Prince announced that he was willing to go to work, and the understanding is that when he comes back in the latter part of April, he will be got a job in some company in which Mr. Rolker is interested."

Charles did listen. Indeed, he had listened to all Mr. Gorham had said, and while he knew that his suit was

not exactly prospering, yet, on the other hand, if words meant anything, one happy fact stood out. There had been "a hundred or so" young men in love with Alison, but no one of them had yet prevailed. Mr. Gorham had framed all his sentences as if Alison's future was still undecided. Surely it was. But Mr. Gorham was continuing: —

"Now, that's the kind of damn fool that so many of us Americans are. Who's this prince? The papers give him a capital 'P.' But who is he?" Charles did n't know. "Of course you don't. Nor any one else either. But the point is: what 'job' can he do? N–O–N–E." Mr. Gorham spelt out the monosyllable. "He can go to an office and hold down a desk, but he 'll never do any work. And after about a week he won't even pretend to. And, what 's more, his father-in-law won't even want him to pretend to. I 'm not going to have any nonsense of that kind with Alison. Now, the third point. You say you 've got some money. What 's 'some money' ? I 'll wager — now, I don't want to be offensive, Caerleon, but you must let me say what I have to say — now I 'll wager that you've got less than would pay for Alison's cars, less very likely than would pay her dressmaker's bills."

And having in this last sentence done his daughter an injustice, Mr. Gorham paused. An injustice, because Alison was very far from being one of those women who spend money like water on clothes they never wear. She never would have served as an awful example of feminine extravagance of the kind that the cheap magazines hold up to the wonder and envy of their half-million readers. "What it Costs a Woman to Dress in the Smart Set."

Indeed, Alison was only in "the Smart Set" to the extent to which her father's connections made absolutely inevitable. Well dressed she was, as Charles knew, but her well-dressing was reasonable.

Mr. Gorham had only paused. Before Charles could come to the rescue of his own character against the attacks implied in what had been said, he began again:

"But even if you had quite a lot of money, I would n't wish Alison to marry you. You know I like you, Caerleon; I do, and I have reason to. But there 's all the difference in the world between liking a man and wanting to trust him with one's daughter. Your trouble is, you are n't a worker. We like workers in America. A man who has no work to do is n't likely to avoid mischief. It 'd be a bit different if you had an estate. That might occupy you. But your brother 's got that. If he dies — which the Lord forbid! — and if his two boys die, and if your two other brothers, both of whom seem to be fairly well and hearty (you see, I thought what we 've been talking about might happen, and I 've been looking you up in 'Debrett'), go to heaven — well, then, you 'll come into title and estate. But we need n't reckon on that —"

Here Charles jumped in. "Mr. Gorham, you don't wrap things up; I won't either. I love your daughter. I 've told you that — I 've given you notice of it, so to speak. Now, I propose to tell her. She 's of age. If she can't love me — well, that 's the end, I suppose; but, if she can, if she does, what are you going to do about it? I 'm not a fortune-hunter — heaven knows! I think you 'd acquit me of that."

Mr. Gorham assented with a grim smile.

"No, nor do I want your money. I 've got nearly fifteen hundred a year of my own." Charles was a little sanguine: it had once reached fifteen hundred, but that was in a peculiarly good year; nor did his figures take heed of the inroads that his little extravagances had made in his income: his capital he could n't touch, but there was, and there had been, nothing to prevent his borrowing, and paying the interest out of income while he looked for a windfall. "If Miss Gorham can care for me I will, in spite of what you say, find work. Friends offered me work when I came down from Oxford. I shall ask Miss Gorham. I do not think that is unfair. I love her too much to give her up just because you prefer an American son-in-law."

"I did n't say so," Mr. Gorham answered. "As a matter of fact, if you had any good working qualities, I 'd as soon have you for a son-in-law as anyone else I 've seen — rather, I don't mind saying. Besides, I like your spirit. If Alison 'll marry you (and everything is possible with a girl), whether I approve or not, and if, what is even more, you don't care whether she has money or not — well, I don't quite see what I 'm to do to stop it. Look here, Caerleon, I 'll make a bargain with you. If you will promise me not to speak to Alison about this now, and if you will in the mean time both look for work and put your back into it when you get it, then, in a year's time, if she 's still free, I 'll withdraw my not very strong opposition. You shall have your chance. What do you say? Much of what I said just now I said, frankly, to try you, and I don't mind telling you that if you 're in

love with Alison, I believe, now I come to think it over, that Alison 's more than half in love with you. Anyhow, I don't think you 'll lose anything by waiting and not speaking now. She won't forget you in such a hurry."

It never took Charles long to make up his mind. "Yes, sir, I agree to that. I suppose I may see Miss Gorham as usual in the mean time?"

"Now, there you go. How can you see her in the mean time if you 're away looking for work, and working? Why, we, as you know, are going to Rome and Egypt and God knows where. And even while we 're in Paris, you won't find work at the Chatham bar or places like this."

Charles flushed; he knew Mr. Gorham was right. "I mean, may I see her and you while you remain in Paris, just as if we had not had this talk?"

"No, sir, you may not. You can — if you 're wise — go away from Paris — we 'll come to that directly. Alison said that, as she could n't be here to-night, I was to ask you to dine to-morrow. I am doing so now. And, when you go — and I hope it will be the next day — not that I shan't be sorry to lose you — we 'll come and see you off, and wish you good luck."

"Very well, Mr. Gorham. I understand, and I appreciate what you say. I don't think you 're treating me unfairly. The day after to-morrow I 'll clear out of Paris and go and see my friends in England, and see what work I can get."

"Now, listen to me. What work do you expect to get? You say that, when you left Oxford, friends offered you

work. Does n't it occur to you that they offered you work just in order to prevent your becoming a —"

"— a waster," Charles ejaculated, bitterly.

"No, that 's nonsense; you 're not a waster: an idler is the word I wanted. They likely did it just to prevent your drifting about as you 've been doing. Besides, that was ten years ago. You had n't got the lazy habits then that you have now. And you were younger. No, you won't get any real work in England. You must go to America or Canada — Australia 's no use to you: it 's too far off: no sooner 'd you get there than you 'd be thinking of coming back, because your year was nearly up. I 'll do something for you. Not what that man we were reading about just now proposes to do for his prince. I think *you* 're serious. I 'll give you a letter of introduction to some people I know in New York. You 're interested in railway matters — well, if you make a good impression, they 'd give you a job over there, I dare say. Mind you, I shan't write any other letter to them than that I 'll give you to take. And you can read that."

Charles thanked him.

"No, you need n't thank me. I 'm taking the easiest way out of a difficulty. I like you well enough to want you to have every chance. I don't much believe in a man who 's been an idler till he 's your age suddenly starting work — but, we 'll see. If you make good in America, then, if Alison wants you, I shan't say no. If you don't make good, I hope you'll have the good feeling to stop away, and then we shan't have any trouble. Besides, you may change your mind."

"No fear of that, Mr. Gorham. And I want you to understand. I 'll work just as hard as I can: I won't muff my chances if I can help it — but — well, if I don't make good, as you call it, I don't promise to relinquish my attempt to marry Miss Gorham. After all, fifteen hundred a year, say, is enough to live on — and I 'm sure to get more later on."

"Waiting for dead men's shoes is n't worth while, my boy. You should n't bank on that."

"I 'm not banking on it. . . ." Charles thought it was time to get on to less dangerous, less personal topics. "But you must tell me about New York. I 've never been there. They don't like Englishmen there much, do they?"

"They like them all right if they 're likeable. There are a lot of things you 'd have to cut out. That eyeglass, if you can. They don't like eyeglasses in America. And the spats you wear — spats, you call 'em, don't you? I once knew an Englishman who went to see the President — Roosevelt — at the White House in spats and an eyeglass, but I rather fancy he must have done it for a bet. He left the country pretty soon after. It 's too much to expect you to change your way of speaking in a few days, but if you only could get to talk decent American it 'd help a lot."

"What do you call decent American?"

"Why, the way Americans talk. You English people talk like the guys they give the comic parts to in the theatres — English parts, I mean. We never realise that it 's anything else but burlesque, something quite impossible, till we get to London and hear everyone

talking it. And get some clothes made by an American tailor. Wear something that does n't look as if you 'd grown out of it."

Mr. Gorham had helped himself to the old brandy of the house more than once since they had begun their serious conversation, and Charles looked at him to see if he was any the worse for it. Or was he, in spite of his apparent good-nature of a few minutes ago, wanting to pick a quarrel? Or was he a humourist? There was nothing to show. He looked both benign and serious. He was always pink.

"I 'll see what I can do to improve myself," Charles said. He did n't even throw a sarcastic note into his voice. If it had n't been for Alison, though, he 'd have countered Mr. Gorham's criticisms with the indictment of American clothes, manners, speech that trembled on the end of his tongue. Watch-ribbons from which hang imitation Regency ornaments; "rubbers"; the use of "nope" and "yep" for the more gracious "no" and "yes"; the built-up shoulders and baggy legs of the American "business suit" — no, the list is too long. To each nation its own foolishness, he said to himself. But, all the same, he registered a mental vow that, unless the winning of Alison altogether depended on it, he would n't give up his eyeglass.

The evening seemed at an end. They had been longer talking than Charles had realised. Mr. Gorham paid his bill. Nothing should, nothing was to happen that night. Charles was an organiser. Refusing the services of the taxis that were waiting outside the restaurant, he crossed the boulevard and selected one from the moving

stream. Its presence could not have been premeditated.

Mr. Gorham's last words as he went into the Meurice were: "Oh, yes, I promise to take care of myself."

CHAPTER XV

THE STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE OF MR. GORHAM

CHARLES did not feel that he had any great cause for disquiet or dissatisfaction. True, Mr. Gorham did not entirely smile on his suit, but all the same he seemed not unwilling, under certain conditions and in certain circumstances, to help it forward. The worst feature was the necessity under which he now was of saying no word to Alison herself. But did that so very greatly matter? Surely she knew already all there was to know. . . . And although he was himself debarred from explaining to her why he was leaving Paris and going so incontinently to America, yet surely the odds were that Mr. Gorham would intentionally or unintentionally let it out, if not in so many words, at least in such a way that she would understand.

And so, after his dinner with Mr. Gorham, Charles went happily to bed.

With his coffee in the morning he bade the waiter bring him the "folders" of the various transatlantic steamship lines. If he was to go he had better arrange to go at once. The sooner the better. Perhaps there was a boat to-morrow. But it was already the Tuesday of the week, and there was no good boat that he could catch till the Wednesday of its successor. If he cut his dinner to-night he could make the Olympic by a little hustling, but he was n't going to cut his dinner for all the White

Star boats in the world. It might give Mr. Gorham a good opinion of his seriousness, but that advantage would have been bought at too high a price. Now Charles knew little more than the reputations of the various lines and the names of the crack boats. Save for a healthy prejudice against the German lines, he did n't care what he sailed in as long as he crossed the ocean in the minimum of time. So many more days would he have in which to make good in America. The sooner he was there the more quickly would he be back. The Mauretania was obviously the boat for him to take, and, getting up, Charles strolled round to the Rue Scribe to see about a berth. He could afford to stroll; had he not a whole week on his hands?

But had he? True, it was eight days and an hour before he need be at Euston to catch the boat special, but there were things to do in that week, and in any case he could n't pass the time in Paris. He felt that Mr. Gorham would n't swallow any excuse for hanging about that was based on the fact that the steamers did n't fit. No, he 'd have to go away from Paris, and he did n't exactly want to go back to his friends in England. And why should he? In the first place, there would be the necessity for all sorts of awkward explanations. His brothers would be annoyed at the idea of his seeking his fortune in New York. Nor had he any important dispositions to make in England. There were, in spite of Mr. Gorham's admonitions, no clothes to buy. Oh! that reminded him: Bowles must be retrieved, and so must the luggage. And then Bowles must be dismissed. If he were going to New York to seek a fortune it would be

just as well to go without the handicap of a valet. Mr. Gorham should know of that concession to seriousness. And the baggage? Bowles could n't get it because his master had the ticket. What should he do? Should he telegraph money to Bowles and telegraph at the same time for the baggage, or should he. . . ? Yes, he would — that was the thing to do. He had a return ticket to Monte Carlo, and he'd better use it. After all, it was only a night's journey. He could go down through the next night, collect his belongings, settle up one or two small outstanding affairs, say good-bye to one or two sympathetic friends, and be back in London in three days. It was an easy matter getting a place in the *wagon-lit*.

Mr. Gorham had mentioned neither time nor place for this last, this almost farewell, dinner; so Charles turned up at the Meurice at eight o'clock. His host was not in, the porter thought; indeed, he was sure he had n't come in. But Miss Gorham was upstairs. Would Charles wait in the drawing-room while his name was being announced? He thought it odd, but he sank into a chair and began to read "Comœdia," or to pretend to read it. . . . But what could Mr. Gorham be doing out of the hotel so late? Why, it was dark — and he'd said he would n't go out after dark! Still, it was unlikely that anything had happened. The porter at least had shown no distress.

Charles sat on. It was not till a quarter past eight that any fresh notice was taken of him, and then it was a page who came with the request that he would go upstairs. Why? Charles had not been so honoured before.

However, he followed the page, and found himself alone in one of the private sitting-rooms of the hotel. And then more delay. It was all very strange. He fancied he could hear movements on the other side of the door, but it was n't for him to listen. Perhaps Mr. Gorham had come in and was hurrying his dressing. And when at last the door opened it was Alison who appeared — a white-faced Alison. Charles just had time to ask himself whether this was because she had been ill? And yet Mr. Gorham had said there was n't "anything really" the matter with her. But he had no time for further conjecture.

"Mr. Caerleon, I've asked you to come up here because Papa's disappeared. I mean, he went out and he has n't come back —"

"But, Miss Gorham, he'll be back directly, surely. I expect he 's only delayed —"

"No, he's sent me a letter. I 'd have shown it to you anyhow. You've been such a friend these last few days" — and Alison smiled through what looked suspiciously like unshed tears. "He asks that I should give it you. First let me tell you, though, that directly I got it I thought of telephoning to you. I did n't know anyone else who'd be more likely to be able to help. Besides, you were there the other night. But, do you know, I had n't any idea where you were stopping. Here's the letter, though; read it."

My darling Alison, — I don't want you to worry because I'm not coming back to-night. Nothing bad 's going to happen to me. You know what happened the

other night — well, this time they 've got me. No, it is n't any French Apaches. I don't want ransoming. I'll be let out all right in a few days. I want you directly you get this to send for Mr. Caerleon. He 'll explain. And don't give it out that I've disappeared, *and don't, above all, tell the police.* My best love, daughter. Keep cheerful.

CYRUS GORHAM.

P.S. — You 'd better send up to the Astoria and ask Mrs. Phillips if she won't move down to the Meurice, and let her have my room till I get back. Tell her she 'll be doing me a real kindness if she will. But ask her not to say a word.

Charles finished reading. It was not so obscure. He thought he understood. For a moment he paused to think. It was clear that "Old Man Pyle " had got Mr. Gorham, but what was n't clear was how it was that Mr. Gorham had allowed himself to be got. He asked Alison to tell him more.

"All I know, Mr. Caerleon, more than is in that note, is that this afternoon about four o'clock, a few minutes after we 'd come in from the Bois, the room telephone here rang. I went to it. It was the office wanting to speak to Papa. He took the receiver. Cook's apparently had telephoned to ask whether he could step round to the Rue de Rivoli to settle some question that had arisen on the tickets we 'd taken this morning for Egypt. We are, or were, going there in a week or two. I could hear that Papa did n't want to step round — he 'd told me

he had n't been feeling so very good, and that he did n't want to go out nights, — but apparently Cook's would have him, because they had to write to-day to Cairo. I said I 'd go with him, but he would n't let me. He 'd be back anyway in a few minutes. I was to order tea. I did. And then I waited. After twenty minutes this note came."

Alison would have made a first-class witness. Charles felt that he knew all she had to tell him, and indeed, that with her explanation, he knew more than she knew herself. It was his turn now to explain. First, though, he asked if Mrs. Phillips — whoever she might be — had joined Alison?

"Oh, yes; Constance is a brick. She came at once. She's in there" — Alison pointed to a door — "unpacking. She's going to stop till Papa comes back — oh, but, Mr. Caerleon, what does it all mean? When will he come back? Is he safe?" She was perilously near breaking down.

"Yes, Miss Gorham, he 'll come back, and he 's quite safe, I should say."

"But Mr. Caerleon, you must help me more than that. Papa would never have told me to send for you unless he was sure you could really cheer me up some way. Who has 'got' Papa? What does he mean?"

"I think I know, Miss Gorham, and I think I know too what your father meant by saying you were to send at once for me. I can't help much; but it does happen that yesterday and the day before he told me a lot about his affairs, and all about that attempt to kidnap him in the Rue Lepic on Sunday morning. It all fits in —"

"But, Mr. Caerleon, is he in any danger?"

"It does n't look as if he thought so; now, does it?" For one unworthy moment Charles, remembering his first meeting with Mr. Gorham, recalling his gallantry, and recalling too his own failure to identify any factor of danger as they walked back from Gerny's a couple of nights ago, wondered if his host's disappearance was quite above-board. "Don't, above all, tell the police": that looked fishy! But no. Charles did n't think Mr. Gorham would mix cabbages and baskets. He would n't frighten his daughter in so serious a way just for the sake of some passing amour. Besides, he had been very explicit. The unworthy moment had not been without advantage. Charles had thought things out. He could continue with the greater confidence: —

"Miss Gorham, I 'll tell you all I know, and all I guess. I won't keep anything back. And I need n't cut it short, because if we 're not to tell the police — and I suppose in that matter we are to take your father's instructions implicitly — we 've got several hours of inaction before us. Cook's might be able to tell us something, but they 're closed now, and we can't make any inquiries there till the morning. What a pity you did n't know where I 'm stopping! It 's the Chatham. Now, in the first place, when that taxi tried that game the other night it was n't an affair of Apaches at all: it was an affair of your own countrymen. Mr. Gorham has been engaged in some big Stock Exchange deal, and he 's run up against all sorts of rich men with more money than scruple. Apparently, if only they could get him out of the way, they 'd planned it out that they 'd be able to beat him

at the game. There are two ways of getting people out of the way: you can kill 'em" — Alison gasped, and Charles held up a deprecating hand — "or you can kidnap 'em. Your father's chief enemy seems to have been an old man called Pyle —"

"Why, Mr. Caerleon, I know Mr. Pyle quite well. He 's not old — not so old as Papa, and he 's a friend of Papa's. It can't be him."

"It is, though, Miss Gorham. Do you ever call this friend of your father's 'Old Man Pyle'?"

"Why, yes, they do. But he 's not so very old, all the same. He 's often been to see us. Besides, he 's churchwarden at the church we go to —"

"Miss Gorham, I 'm telling this story. I can only tell it the way I see it after what your father told me. I dare say Mr. Pyle is a most exemplary citizen on Sundays and when Wall Street is closed, or whatever they call it, but he 's the man your father 's been fighting and interfering with. It 's about the control of some railway, and we 're always told on this side" — Charles was becoming quite American in his speech in his wish to be both terse and quickly convincing — "that your business men would skin their own brothers for the sake of a turn in the market."

"Yes, that 's true, Mr. Caerleon. I know that. But Mr. Pyle —"

"Well, Mr. Pyle wanted your father out of the way, and it was Mr. Pyle who tried through some associate of his to have him kidnapped the other night. Why, your father recognised the man. It was the man I knocked down, and who afterwards got away. He got away

because your father helped him. He told me so himself the next day. He let him go because he did n't want the scandal and the bother, and because he knew the man's family. That attempt failed, and it was the next day (you know when I came round to ask after you on Sunday, and your father and I went out) that I was told how the land lay. I begged your father then to be more careful, and he promised he would. I remember he said he 'd only go out in the daylight, and that then they would n't be able to dig him out here. That was why I came to fetch him last night. Practically he promised me he 'd take tremendous care of himself. Because, either he was mad or romancing, or else those American friends of yours were really and truly trying to get hold of him. In that case, they were n't likely to be satisfied with that one attempt. However, I did n't worry so very much, because Mr. Gorham, in the first place, as I 've said, promised to take care, and, in the second, he said that in a very few days the thing would have worked itself out. I understand him to mean that, say by the end of a week or two, things would have so shaped themselves that 'Old Man Pyle' would take his beating. Perhaps you have 'settling days' in New York?"

"I think I can understand now, Mr. Caerleon. I don't know what I should have done if you 'd not been here. What ought we to do, please? You 're sure in your own mind that Papa 's in no danger? You 're sure we ought n't to go to the police?"

"Mr. Gorham is in no danger, if what he told me is true — if, I mean, he 's right in what he believes; and we shan't gain anything, I think, by telling the police. That

note 's in your father's hand. It can't all have been dictated, forced out of him, or else he would n't have been allowed to tell you to send for me. He does n't want the police interfering. They'd mix up the whole affair, and so would all the papers, with the motor-car bandits. And I doubt whether we should be any nearer getting your father back . . ."

"But is n't there anything we can do?"

"Yes." Charles, as I have said, was an organiser; also he was practical. He had seen that these hours of anxiety were telling on Alison. "Yes, we can dine. I dare say your friend — Mrs. Phillips — is ready for her dinner. I am for mine. Oh, I know you think you can't eat — but you can try. Your father'll have his dinner wherever he may be. Now please do what I tell you. Telephone down and say that the dinner ordered for eight o'clock will be wanted in ten minutes — no, don't leave the telephone: now ask for the porter. Say that about six o'clock a note was left here by hand, addressed to you, and tell him to send up whoever actually took it in, at once. By the way, you did n't show me the envelope."

Neither paper nor envelope was of any value as a clue. They were of the kind that the waiter of the boulevard café brings when he's asked for writing materials— the rottenest envelope, and a sheet of paper all cut up into little squares by the ruling. Both the address and the note itself were written quite normally, evidently with the fountain pen Mr. Gorham habitually carried.

Facts won't lend themselves into making a detective story, a romance of mysterious crime, out of this vera-

cious chronicle, so I had better say at once that although Charles rather fancied himself as an investigator, yet even he, when a knock came at the door and one of the under-porters came in, failed to elicit anything of the slightest real importance. The driver of a horse cab had brought the note. He had driven up in the ordinary way, and the porter thought he might remember him again, because he'd had words with him for coming to the door and taking up the space with an empty cab just at the time when that space was most wanted. Yes, he had said something — that no answer was wanted, and that he'd been given the letter by an Englishman.

"From all of which we may deduce," said Charles, when they were alone again, "just one fact — that your father is n't so very far away. You said the note arrived after about twenty minutes. Let 's say half an hour. In that half hour he had to be kidnapped and to get somewhere sufficiently private to write that letter. They could n't have made him write it in a café. Then it had to get here — in a horse cab. No, he's within a couple of miles. But the ten minutes is up: what about dinner?"

"Mr. Caerleon, you're like Papa. He won't do without his dinner either. But I must call Mrs. Phillips. She knows that Papa's disappeared; she's seen that note. But we won't tell her any more. She's so nice that she won't even try to find out."

Charles was all the better pleased. A secret, so many secrets, brought him closer to Alison. It was almost a family intimacy.

CHAPTER XVI

A BEATING OF THE AIR

HIS friends would hardly have said that Charles was a person of sanguine temperament, but all the same he was not in the habit of borrowing trouble, of crossing bridges before he came to them, of counting sad chickens before they were hatched, of looking on the dark side of things. What's the use? he'd have asked if he'd been of Miss Gorham's nationality. True, they — he thought of himself as one of the family now! — had enough to worry about. The kidnapping of heads of families was not a matter of everyday occurrence. Mr. Gorham was gone, and Heaven alone knew whether, or when, he'd return. Charles had said cheerfully that he was convinced that there was no danger, but was n't there always danger when unscrupulous men found themselves in a hole? Supposing things so shaped that Mr. Gorham had to be jettisoned. Better dead than alive, his captors might say.

So thought Charles to himself as he went down to dinner in the wake of Alison and her Mrs. Phillips — such a pleasant type of American woman, with that charming urbanity, that cheerful, unpushing alertness that Philadelphia, city of homes, seems to breed. She not only reminded one of Rittenhouse Square: she was the Square. Charles knew he'd get on with her at once. If all Alison's friends are like this one, he said to himself,

I'll want some of them to stop with us all the time. She had come in when Alison had summoned her, and Charles had been "presented," and had, of course, forgotten to follow the proper American formula — "pleased to meet you, Mrs. Phillips" — and Mrs. Phillips had thought no worse of him on that account, but had smiled with sympathy, and had had the sense — oh, if such sense were more common here in the country where I write this! — to avoid any mention of their immediate preoccupation.

Still, Mr. Gorham's disappearance could not be ignored. Naturally, it hung like a blight over a party that might otherwise have been entirely festive. Charles certainly was as festive as he dared. And Miss Gorham — she had braced herself up, and was a hostess who was determined to carry things off. She pleased Charles by choosing the wine herself. "I know you'd rather drink claret, Mr. Caerleon," and she ordered a Haut Brion which was even too good for the occasion — unless "Papa's" disappearance was to form the criterion of importance; and for herself and Mrs. Phillips a 1904 champagne just sufficiently out of the ruck to convince Charles that when he was away she would n't drink the contents of his cellar as if it were ginger-beer.

"Papa told me, Mr. Caerleon, that you were going away to-morrow, and that he'd said we'd show our proper sense of all we owe you by coming to see you off. Perhaps it'll be spoiling you; but, as he said that, Mrs. Phillips and I will do the best we can. We'll come — won't we, Constance."

Constance answered "Sure" almost before Charles could interpose: —

"But I'm not going now, Miss Gorham; I shall stop here and see what happens, and see if I can be of any kind of use to you. You'll let me, please. Besides, I was n't really leaving till next week. Then I'm going — or was going — to America. But to-morrow I was only intending to run down to the Riviera to get my baggage and to find my man and to do a little business. You see, Paris is a little dull just now," — he had begun to flounder, poor young man, — "and anyhow I have a return ticket that'll be wasted if I don't use it."

"But of course you'll use it, Mr. Caerleon; you must n't waste a return ticket!" Alison did n't want him to use it; she'd be seriously offended if he did, or hurt perhaps — but she had been nettled by his "Paris is a little dull." "Of course you'll use it. We can get on alone. You said yourself that what Papa had written was all right. We can just wait — can't we, Constance? We'll see Mr. Caerleon off, — if he's not going by some nine o'clock train, — and then we'll enjoy ourselves and spend Papa's money and do all the things he hates me to do because he thinks 'em dull. I want to spend days in the Cluny, for instance."

"You shall spend days in the Cluny, Miss Gorham: I'll go with you, if you 'll let me. I know it quite well; I was there yesterday. For you can be sure I shan't go away till Mr. Gorham 's back and safe and sound. You may not want me, but 'I'm there if I'm wanted,' as the music-hall song says. And as for spending Mr. Gorham's money," — Charles spoke with his lips curving to a smile, but his eyes were serious, — "don't forget that what he's in is a financial deal, that this kidnapping

is only the small end of it, its least important side. Your friend Mr. Pyle, if I understood your father aright, will, now that he's got him, proceed to take all his money away from him. I should go slow on the spending — and keep enough to carry you back to America."

But Alison was still a little sore. "I can't *make* you go, Mr. Caerleon, and anyhow I 'm very grateful to you — but I don't want you to alter your plans for me, for us. As for the money, I dare say there'll be enough to take us round some, and yet to carry us back to Philadelphia." She did n't propose to stand for Charles's half-serious joke. "And now, Mr. Caerleon, I'm going to send you away. You were n't leaving Paris anyhow till to-morrow evening, you say. Well, we'll see you again before then." She relented a little. "Besides, we are to see you off — but apart from that, perhaps after all you'd just come round here and — and cheer us up a little at about eleven in the morning. Come along, Constance; good-night again, Mr. Caerleon." And she was gone, leaving Charles in almost open-mouthed admiration of the self-control of young American womanhood. It was useless to fret, and so Alison was not fretting.

Charles could not know that long after the streets were quiet, long after he himself was asleep, Alison's eyes were still unclosed, that her pillow was wet with anxious tears.

CHAPTER XVII

IN WHICH THE AMIABLE CHARLES AT LAST LEAVES PARIS

IT is unpleasant to be called before the hour one has anticipated. Having been told to come to the Meurice at eleven o'clock, Charles, knowing that whatever happened he would have no easy day before him, had ordered his coffee for nine o'clock. But at exactly fourteen minutes after eight there came a rap on his door. He woke reluctantly — and paid, I may incidentally mention, for the outrage on his peace by having a headache until lunch-time. Nowadays the young man of thirty-three is a tender plant. The chasseur had come to say that he was wanted on the telephone.

"Mr. Caerleon — Mr. Caerleon — Mr. Caer — Ah, I am so glad you've come. I want to see you at once. No; not at once; I'm not up yet, but in half an hour, — no, in forty minutes. I've got a letter from Papa. He has a message for you. I'll tell you when you come. . . . No, perhaps you'd better not come till half-past nine. We'll both be ready then. What? What's that you say? How did it come? By post. The postmark? Wait a moment. It's Bercy. Please hurry — I mean, come punctually at half-past nine. Good-bye."

This affair, said Charles to himself, was evidently going to keep him on the jump. And yet, somehow, he could n't just then take it with any great, any dramatic seriousness. It was American. And America was so far off. Mr.

Gorham himself had n't, it had been perfectly evident, thought so very much of the moral obliquity of "Old Man Pyle" and his gang. He seemed to take the risk of being kidnapped as all in the day's work. And yet that was absurd. It simply meant that Mr. Gorham had nerve. And then no doubt he had never expected that he would have been caught asleep. Some day, perhaps, he'd explain to Charles exactly how it did happen.

Charles dressed, and dressing drank that bad coffee that the very occasional visitor to Paris is so ready to praise, and having dressed was shaved and decorated with a carnation. Now it was nine o'clock, and Cook's would be open. His eyeglass, his politeness, never certain except with his social inferiors, won him immediate attention. Could they tell him — he came from Miss Gorham, of course — why they'd telephoned to Mr. Gorham at the Meurice on the previous afternoon? What had been the matter with the Egyptian tickets? Much running about; much consultation. At last is produced the very man who had sold Mr. Gorham the tickets. He did n't understand. There was nothing the matter with the tickets, surely? They had n't suggested that there was. And no one had telephoned to Mr. Gorham. The whole thing was rather a mystery. Charles could discover no light . . . and yet, when he went over the ground once more with the assistant, he did learn something which might easily prove of importance. Mr. Gorham had taken time, having his route and the conditions explained to him. After he had gone — directly after — a man who had waited at the counter not far from him had said that he too wanted to go away and

that he was uncertain as to where he should go, but that it had seemed to him that the tour chosen by the last gentleman might suit him. So the assistant went over it with him, wondering the while, he now remembered, how he could have such good ears that some yards off, where he had stood, he had heard the particulars of Mr. Gorham's projected journey. The assistant agreed now that he had n't, as a matter of fact, done other than say "the same tour." Anyhow, he'd ordered the same tour, and had asked that the tickets should be prepared for him. He was coming in that morning at eleven to get them. Had n't he left any name or address? Yes, he had. It was Costigan — and he was stopping at the Westminster.

It was already the hour that Miss Gorham had appointed, but Charles took the time to drive round to the Westminster. "Is Mr. So-and-So in?" he asked, naming a friend of his who, when in Paris, usually stopped there. He was n't — as Charles well knew. And then, as he turned away, as if by an afterthought: "Have you a Mr. Costigan in the hotel?"

The porter thought not, and an examination of the register confirmed his doubt.

Really, as a detective Charles began to think no small beer of himself. He was right, then: the summons to Cook's was all in my eye — the telephone call had come from one of the kidnappers; and as for this Costigan, he evidently had gone through his little act with the tickets in order to know exactly where Mr. Gorham was going next — in the unlikely event of his leaving Paris before they could get hold of him. The whole affair was

dead easy. As a reward for his own intelligence he stopped the taxi and chose for Alison a large bunch of the most beautiful white carnations he could find. More delay — but the flowers were worth it.

Miss Gorham showed no signs of distress. Her bath and a resolve to take things calmly now that another day was here had cleared away any result of her last night's miseries. But in spite of the flowers she was a little angry at having been kept waiting ten minutes. Charles had to explain what he had been doing, that he could not go to Cook's till they were open, and that it then seemed best to follow up the Costigan clue. Miss Gorham grudgingly agreed.

"But, Mr. Caerleon, is there nothing we can do? Have we just to sit here and wait? And what'll happen to Papa's business in the mean time?"

Charles was ashamed to remember that he had n't kept the business aspect of the matter in his mind. However, . . . and he recalled something else. "You were going to show me the letter you got this morning."

"Stupid of me — I should have shown it you at once. There — you see, it's on exactly the same paper as last night's. Read it. Papa says you're to go away, Mr. Caerleon" — this last with some malice, and with some regret, Charles thought and hoped.

My darling Alison, — I hope you got my letter last night, and that you were n't very anxious about me. You need n't be. I am perfectly well and perfectly safe. I'm being kept away from the cable — that's all. I can't explain now, but it's business: there is n't any danger

unless the police get busy. Then anything might happen. I think you'll see me again in sixteen days. Tell Caerleon not to stop in Paris on my account. Indeed, you can show him this letter. I'm particularly anxious he should n't alter any of his plans. I shall be very disappointed if he does. I hope Mrs. Phillips is with you. I shan't be able to write again. Good-bye, daughter.

CYRUS K. GORHAM.

P.S. — About Mr. Caerleon. I'm not allowed to write to him, but I want you to say to him that I'm very serious about his going away. He'll think perhaps he ought to stop, but I'm all right, and there is no reason for his stopping on my account. I hold him to his promise, tell him; he'll understand.

"There is n't a word about business in the letter, Mr. Caerleon, and he does n't say what I'm to do with his letters and cables. There's a mail in from America this morning and two cables for him too — one last night and one this morning. What am I to do about them? Why did n't he say in his letter whether I was to open them?"

"Your father, Miss Gorham, has been kidnapped just in order that he should n't attend to his cables. He tells you that. They would n't have been stupid enough to let him send instructions about them." Charles felt inclined to add a "See, silly?" to his sentence; but, in the first place, he did not know Alison well enough, and, in the second, he remembered that he had n't explained with any clearness about Mr. Gorham's Stock Exchange deal. Alison could n't know that he was managing his

affairs by cable or understand by inspiration all the implications of the kidnapping.

"Don't you open your father's telegrams when he's away, Miss Gorham?" Charles went on.

"No, never. He lets no one open them — not even his secretary when he's in New York; and when his telephone rings there — the telephone in his own room, I mean: it's got a private number — no one is allowed to answer it. So I dare n't open his cables now — unless you think I ought."

"I don't, Miss Gorham. Your father evidently is as secretive as an oyster and as reticent as a cuttlefish, and we may as well respect his peculiarities. Besides, it would n't do any good to open them. He told me he got these cables and then replied with instructions. We can't invent instructions. We have n't the slightest idea what he wants. My own idea is that, even if we knew — perhaps you do — who his agent is, it would be a mistake to cable to him. If he gets no replies he may at least believe that your father 's satisfied with the position, and leave it at that. Perhaps that'll exactly suit your father's book — anyway, it's an even chance to begin with. Whereas if we cable that he's gone away and left no address, or that he's been kidnapped, or that he's too ill to attend to business, there's no certainty that the fact would n't get out, and that might damage his interests more even than anything his enemies may do. As things stand, his agent won't do anything at all. I know that, because Mr. Gorham told me that if he cabled no instructions no steps were taken. We must just do nothing and trust to luck."

"But, Mr. Caerleon, it's all so dreadful. Of course, getting this letter this morning has cheered me a little, but I am frightened" — there was a tremulous note in Alison's voice, and Charles would have taken her hand if his promise to Mr. Gorham was not so clearly in his mind. He wondered if she knew.

"One thing, though, Mr. Caerleon, is clear: you must carry out your own plans." Then Alison smiled, a little twisted smile. "Of course, I must n't order you about. Neither I nor Papa can prevent your stopping in Paris if you want to. What I meant was that I must n't let you stop in Paris for my sake. No, please don't argue. Besides, I can prove to you you ought to go. The natural thing last night when you came round was for us to have gone at once to the police and to have put the whole thing in their hands. Why did n't we? Because Papa told me not to. It did n't sound sensible advice, but we took it — and we believed him, too, when he said he was in no danger. Well, we've got — you've got — to do what he tells you in this, too. I don't know why he does n't want you to stop, but he evidently does n't; he evidently is more than ordinarily anxious for you to go."

Charles, of course, did know — but he could n't tell Miss Gorham without breaking his word. He communed with himself awhile. If he went to the South that evening, according to his first programme, then in that case he had better go the whole hog and, deferring still further to Mr. Gorham's wishes, not see Alison again for the stipulated twelve months. After all, to see her thus, to see her and never to be able to give either his eyes or his tongue liberty, was a sad joy. Apparently

he was to treat this kidnapping affair as of no dramatic, of no vital importance. Mr. Gorham had been kidnapped, and was to be kept in durance for a fortnight or so. Well, so much the worse for Mr. Gorham. It seems it was to be treated as a Wall Street incident. He would come out shorn. Charles certainly could n't help him now. And could he be of any great service to his daughter? He doubted it. She had Mrs. Phillips and her maid, and she had her own courage and her own high spirit and her own declared intention not to be dull. And then he must remember that he was n't an accepted or even a declared suitor of Alison's. Mr. Gorham might naturally have in mind the fact that he was only a recent acquaintance, met by hazard. He might well have some anxiety about leaving his daughter, even with a chaperon, in the society of a young man of whom in effect he knew no more than could be gleaned from the arid reticence of Debrett's pages. . . ."

"Yes, Miss Gorham, perhaps you're right. I don't know. But I'll go. I was going to-night in the *luxe* after an early dinner."

"And Constance and I will come and dine with you and see you off. That was a promise. A Gorham never breaks a promise, however inconvenient. And now, Mr. Caerleon, Constance is waiting for me. We've to go and be fitted at Callot's. We'll drive you as far as your hotel, or the Place de l'Opéra, if you are going that way."

Anglo-Saxon reticence and self-possession are indeed qualities beyond price. At dinner that evening Mr. Gorham's name was mentioned, it is true, but his dis-

appearance was not. The fact that he had been looking forward to plovers' eggs came up, and that he was angry that Mr. Sargent would n't paint Alison; but no one on hearing the conversation would have thought that these two beautifully dressed women, this smart man, were figures in a melodrama. I don't think the abstinence was intentional; it was n't planned. The truth is, that while they talked of Mr. Sargent and Zuloaga, of "L'Assaut" and Mistinguett, they were all thinking of Mr. Gorham, wondering . . . full of anxiety: but Alison could not trust herself to speak of her father — she did n't want to break down; Mrs. Phillips was so much the soul of discretion that, knowing there was more in the wind than Mr. Gorham's disappearance accounted for, she felt that the better part was to talk of anything and everything rather than what was really important: and as for Charles — Charles knew that he was going away: he had arranged that he should sit opposite Alison, and he looked at her and he talked, and he looked at her and he ate, and he looked at her . . . and yet he paid more attention to her companion!

All the world seemed to be at the Gare de Lyon. How often had Charles caught that train! How often had he gone with happy carelessness to his berth! To-night was different. Ordinarily he would have started by intriguing for an empty compartment. To-night he told the conductor the number of his place, saw that his bag was handed in, tipped his porter, and turned to talk to his companions. Ordinarily, too, he would have searched the train for acquaintances, or to see if his fellow pas-

sengers were amusing. To-night he was careless, his eyes were searching Alison's face; now and again he would look at the clock. Each minute was precious.

For Alison to see Charles off was not a pleasure. She began now, after the events of the last two days, to feel that she depended on him. She would have said that she liked him, that she was sorry he was going away. . . . She talked to him, and as she talked, feeling that the moment carried more emotion than it should, she pretended indifference. She would drag her friend into the conversation, and leave her there, becoming, it would seem, suddenly oblivious of their presence. She looked here and there; she, at least, if only to cloak her own feeling, studied the other passengers.

If you had been on the *quai* at that moment, and had been watching Alison, suddenly you would have seen the colour come like a flood over her face and neck, giving place as suddenly to pallor. She whitened. There was, she saw, ten minutes before the train would go.

"Constance, dear, we'll leave now. I think, perhaps, Mr. Caerleon will like to go to his place. No, we won't wait" — this last to Charles, who had protested. "I'm sure, Mr. Caerleon, you'll have a pleasant journey; I hope you will find agreeable fellow passengers." And giving him a cold hand, a hand as irresponsive as that of a corpse, she thanked him once more for his "kindness." "Adieu, Mr. Caerleon," and she was gone.

"I shall not see her again for a year," said Charles to himself. "Why did she go like that?"

In the coupé in which they returned to the hotel Alison was silent. Mrs. Phillips could understand, and

did not attempt to awaken her. For once her friendship was at fault. It was not the fact that Charles had left her that Alison felt. No; she had seen in his very carriage on the train a door of one the compartments open, and through the window — she could not have been mistaken — she had recognised the young girl of four nights ago — the lady of the little blue turban.

That night again Alison wept.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN WHICH APPEARS SIR PETER BAIN, COLLECTOR OF PICTURES

CHARLES went at once to his compartment, finding now for the first time that he was not to have it to himself. He had, however, had the unusual sense to secure the upper of the two berths. Everyone else would have told you the lower was the more comfortable and convenient. When you book your place in a *wagon-lit* the clerk lifts his eyebrows if you ask for the upper place. He is a creature of habit. Charles knew better; knew that although, if you have the lower berth, you avoid the necessity of the unhappy gymnastic efforts with which you climb to the higher, yet you have less room to dress in, you cannot sit upright, you are further from the racks. Moreover, you are too near the dressing and undressing of your companion. No, choose the higher; and while you are about it, ask always for a centre compartment in the car: so will you keep away from the noise, the reverberation of the wheels.

Charles had dined, so he had no ambition but to turn in, to be in the dark, to think of Alison and of the strange change in his fortune, his plans, which the last week had brought. Everyone else but the conductor was in the restaurant car, and it was not a difficult matter to get his bed made up. In a few minutes he had undressed,

put out the light, and with his face to the wall was revolving all the events, the incidents of the past five days. He hugged his memories to himself, his little momentary intimacies with Alison, how she looked at this time and at that, how she had smiled; even he got comfort out of her coldness, her occasional aloofness. And she had leant on him a little. She had sought and she had taken his advice — and above all she had been to see him off that evening. He had not noticed her "Adieu"; nor had he seen her sudden change of countenance. He had seen her seven times. What, he wondered, did her handwriting look like? Alison Caerleon was a pretty name. And from Alison he passed to her father, not to think of his whereabouts or his discomforts or of his future, but of the task that he had been set. There was no great, no surpassing difficulty about it. He was to do his best. Surely he could do that. And supposing — supposing that Mr. Gorham was liberated in a fortnight, and found that his edifice had crumbled away and that he had no longer that large fortune on which he evidently set so much store, surrounding himself with it as with a new frock-coat — well, would n't that help in a way? If his money had gone he might be more willing for Alison to marry someone who was n't himself rich. And then he thought of Alison again. . . .

Before he reached Laroche he was asleep.

The *luxe* which leaves Paris at 7.55 arrives the next morning at its first glimpse of the real Riviera, of the Rivieran Mediterranean, at St. Raphael, at about ten. Charles, who knew every inch of the route, and who had slept through the night past the discreet noises of Dijon

and Maçon, of Lyon and Avignon, and had even almost slept through Marseilles, had planned to rise at Toulon. He liked to take his breakfast as the train ran past the little hill towns, the dead vineyards, the broad plains that stretch from that arsenal town to Frejus. But when he turned on his side to rise he discovered that his sleeping companion had anticipated him. Not a bad-looking fellow, he thought to himself, as for a moment he watched him struggling with his boots and adjusting a careful tie. He wondered who he was, and then noticed suddenly, that from the roll of rugs on the rack at a level with his eyes hung a label — "Sir Peter Bain, 49 Arlington Street, Passenger to Monte Carlo." "Who is he?" Charles asked himself. In the first place, he had a kind of idea he'd seen him before. He associated him with some interest he himself shared. In the second, he was sure he'd heard the name often enough. At the moment he was n't really awake. It would all come back, no doubt, when he got into some fresh air.

Just then the man turned round and saw that Charles was awake. "I hope it suited you my getting up first. You went to bed long before me, so I thought you'd very likely get up first, but you did n't — so I made a dash for it. I'll be through in a moment now, though."

Charles answered politely. He did n't care, he said, when he got up, as long as it was before they reached Monte Carlo. "And you're going to Monte Carlo, too, I see — I could n't help reading your name and address on that label."

"Yes, I go every year — and so do you, I think. I've seen you in the rooms often enough, although we've

never met there." He laid a little stress on the "there"; Charles was n't sure whether it was intentional. He'd chance it, he thought.

"No, I know we've never met at Monte Carlo, and I'm so beastly blind that I never see anyone" — a white lie that; Charles prided himself on seeing everything, and remembering everyone who was worth remembering, whether he knew him or not, — "but I've an idea we've met somewhere else. I can't think where, though."

"I can tell you," Sir Peter Bain answered. "I've just remembered: it was at Christie's one morning last summer. I think you were with young Shafto, and he introduced us — but I've forgotten your name. I was very keen about that Botticelli I bought afterwards, and I'm afraid I did n't pay much attention to anything else."

Botticelli — Sir Peter Bain: why, of course, it all came back now. So this was the man whom all the people in one of Charles's many worlds had talked so much about, the inspired Scotsman who had presented a hundred thousand pounds' worth of pictures to Carburgh in order that the young Carburghian might learn the path to tread, and who had been more abused than praised for his generosity, whom people quarrelled about so, who was lauded here to the skies for his *flair*, his knowledge, his disinterestedness, and who there was blackguarded as a dealer in disguise, a man who was piling up millions by some species of artistic trickery about which no one seemed to be able to be explicit. "Well, if you don't remember my name we're quits, because I certainly never heard yours that day at Christie's — or I'd have remembered having met you. We know lots of

people in common. Were n't you stopping the other day with my sister-in-law, Lady Bude? I was asked to come, but I could n't, for some reason — oh! I know: I'd arranged to start for the South."

And in this way, while Bain finished his dressing, the talk went on. "I don't suppose you'll be long: I'll sit outside and smoke a cigarette, and we can have breakfast together, if you like — if you're going to breakfast!"

"Rather. I'm hungry now. I dined before I left Paris. Besides, you can see so much more from the restaurant car. I've come along this coast times without number, and yet I never tire of looking at it. Good Heavens! here we are at Les Arcs, are n't we? I'll hurry; I must be dressed in time to see Agay."

I think it may be fair to those of my readers who may want to get through this book as quickly as they can, in order that it may be returned to friend or library, if I say straightway that they won't lose any of the thread of the story if they skip all the Peter Bain passages. I have brought him in for three reasons — that he did travel down in Charles's compartment; that of all Charles's circle he is the one who interests me the most, who seems to me most amusing and most worth while to describe; and that I am anxious that you should know that Charles made other friends than *maîtres d'hôtel* and croupiers, and had other interests than food, frocks, and games of chance. He was, as a matter of fact, very glad to meet Bain. All he had heard of his taste, of his wayward generosities, of his curious meanness, had interested him. A French critic had described him in the

"Figaro" as "a tramp — yes, but a tramp who has only to put his hand into his pocket in order to produce tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of francs." Someone else has spoken of him as "the D'Artagnan of the art world" — an inexpert analogy, but not ill conceived. Max drew him as a conjurer in the act of drawing masterpiece after masterpiece out of his hat to the astonishment, the chagrin, of a hundred critics. In fact, he was a character, and Charles liked characters. It was unlikely, however, he feared, as he dressed, that Bain would talk; it was more likely that he would be reticent. You see, Charles did n't know Bain.

Charles soon found, to his great satisfaction, that Bain had, at least about his own affairs, not the slightest hesitation in talking in the frankest, most open, and (seemingly) the most indiscreet of ways. As they ran round the little bay where nestles the one comfortable inn on the Riviera, under Les Trayas, past Cannes and Moorish-looking Antibes, they talked. Charles forgot his preoccupations; Alison and Mr. Gorham receded into the back of his mind. He found that all he had to do was to ask an occasional question and the river would continue to flow — that river of amiable and acid, generous and selfish talk. To enjoy Bain most fully one should know him well, him and his circle. One knew then the importance one should give to this story and that — what to discount. For instance, he told Charles he could n't afford to live for the fortnight of his holiday at Monte Carlo itself.

"I used always to stop in the Condamine for seven francs a day — oh, yes, *pension*, I mean. I'd go there

now, but the place has been pulled down. So I 'm going to the Riva Bella at Cap Martin. That 's pretty cheap, and one does n't have to, one can't, spend all one's time in the rooms: it's such a job getting in and out. And, anyhow, I can't play this year: my banker won't let me. I told him I was coming out, and he said quite frankly that it was n't any use my drawing cheques, for he would n't honour them."

"Why, did you lose so much other years?"

"No, but I lost enough. It became a sort of habit with me coming down here. It was a change. I'd be worried to death in London, and have half Carburgh writing me letters that ought to be answered, and I'd feel that the only thing in the world for me to do was to get right away. There is n't any place in the world in which you can get so right away as you can here. Perhaps it's only changing one nervous excitement for another, but it is a change: that 's the great thing. Why, the first time I came I had no more idea of playing than I had of offering to drive this train. An old lady I know wrote to me that as I was n't well I'd better come down for a couple of weeks and keep her company, that I was n't to think it was expensive, that she could get me a room at less than a couple of pounds a week, all included, and that as for gambling — well, she never went near the rooms. So I packed up gaily and came — in a second-class carriage in a slow train. But, of course, I had to see the gambling, and then it took hold of me rather, and I lost a couple of hundred pounds. I had a feeling I was ruined. I did n't lose it, of course, in one swoop. I lost a little — all I had with me; and then I sent for more —

and so on. Well, I'd lost my couple of hundred, and after that I just did my best to enjoy the place. I did n't play, anyway. The last day I was leaving by the afternoon train. I'd been in to look at the tables, and I said to myself that I'd never see 'em again. Then I took a walk at the back. There's a curiosity-dealer there — I expect you know him: Felicien. I saw a couple of portraits in his window. They were n't quite my kind of thing, but they seemed pretty good. He said they'd been sent down from Paris because no one would buy them there. They were five thousand francs. I offered four — and got them. So he did them up, and he'd send them when I sent the money. I sent it, of course, — a couple of days later. Two days after they reached London I sold the pair for seven hundred and eighty pounds to a dealer, what's his name, in the Haymarket. After that, I felt easier in my mind about the only visit I ever intended paying to Monte Carlo. Since then I've been down every year."

And so Bain went on. One story capped another. Truly, he was marvellous. Not the least marvel about him, Charles said to himself, was that here he was in the *luxe*, which costs just about as much as any train can cost, and yet he refused to stop in Monte Carlo itself because of the expense. He was to see other of Bain's economies later, and to come to learn that it was just by those economies that he had made his life, had achieved his successes, had conquered, again and again, the Philistines. But they were at Nice. It was time to go back to their compartment. Monte Carlo would only be a question of a few minutes.

CHAPTER XIX

A HOT BATH AT THE HÔTEL DE PARIS

TO return to any place year by year is to court unhappiness. One's friends pass. In any normal world some die or go away. In this gay and sinister world of the South they died and they went away — and they disappeared and they were broken. So-and-So would blossom for a season — and then there would be whispers — and he would blossom no more. For one, for two, for three years, in that circle which Charles knew so well, some girl would be queen — and then she too would cease to charm. She was ill, one might hear; or one might hear nothing: she had gone out. For some reason Charles, who had come so regularly to this devil's playground, felt these changes this year more than ever. Perhaps it was because he was older — at thirty-three one is older! — perhaps because for the first time he came from the coldness of the North, perhaps because he had in the last few days been closer to realities. But whatever the reason Charles had no light heart. Even aside from his cares about Alison in Paris, it did n't seem such an easy, such an attractive world. They passed Villefranche, Beaulieu, Eze, Cap d'Ail. Charles remembered the parties he had given, the friends he had taken here and there — even the money he had wasted. . . . Charles tried to banish these unhappy happy

memories and turned to his new friend. They had just passed Monaco station.

Monte Carlo ! Monte Carlo ! It is impossible to capture the inflection every regular visitor knows so well. Mr. and Mrs. Williamson have anticipated my attempt at local colour by using the boy who announces the *ascenseur*, so I must n't follow in their path. Charles saw all the familiar faces. There was the old porter with the white moustache, and there was Cook's man who knows so much more than he will ever tell you; and outside the station all the regular hotel porters who recognised half the people who came from the train, and could tell you which of them was good for ten francs and which for five, and — for even in that world it is a very different matter — which were gentle. They could very likely have told you too which were honest — and that again is a different thing.

Charles was expected. His man was on the platform. He had little luggage, and all he had to do was to get out of the station and walk up to the Paris — the Hôtel de Paris. He had said good-bye to Bain. They were surely to meet again — and at once. No, Bain would n't come to the Paris. Cap Martin was good enough for him.

On the Paris steps Charles was welcomed by the excellent Fleuret himself. It was suitable that he should be. Charles was one of the oldest and the most regular of the hotel's visitors. He, at least, had never given the hotel any anxiety — any financial anxiety. He hastened to say that he was only there anyhow for a few days — perhaps even only for that day. He might go

back that night. He'd tell them later on. So to his room and to his bath.

The sun streamed into Charles's window, and as he lay in his bath he could see the mountains above Roquebrune. But it was not about Monte Carlo that he was thinking, but about Alison and the year that was before him. Not vainly had he said that he might go away that night. The truth was he had now a sense of unrest. Vaguely in his mind he had made a sort of plan for this raid. He was to retrieve his luggage, and dismiss Bowles and send him back to England, and he would see one or two friends, and he would play a little — this one last time. He would play with the money he had still in his pocket. He had given away money at the Abbaye (and had never regretted it); he had paid his bills in Paris; he had paid for his ticket to New York: what was left he would lose — or save. Chance should decide. Charles had n't any exact system; he had a method. At this moment he felt he did n't care what happened in the Rooms. He would win or lose, turn his face toward England or stop a few days in Monaco, just as the fates should decide.

So he lay and lazed — till the water grew cold. Dried and half clothed, he examined his pocket-book, his sovereign-purse, and his loose change. He had, he found, ten five hundred franc notes, two notes for a hundred francs, six louis, and twenty-seven francs in silver — exactly five thousand three hundred and forty-seven francs in all. One or two English sovereigns he had and some English silver, but English money did n't count.

He would put into his stud-box the three hundred and forty-seven francs: that would pay his bill and his expenses back to London when everything else was gone.

I make no excuses for Charles. This was to be his last fling. Mr. Gorham might n't approve, but there was something logical in playing with the money he had brought from England to play with. He'd go back to Paris, and to England, see his lawyer . . . and then good-bye, irresponsibility.

CHAPTER XX

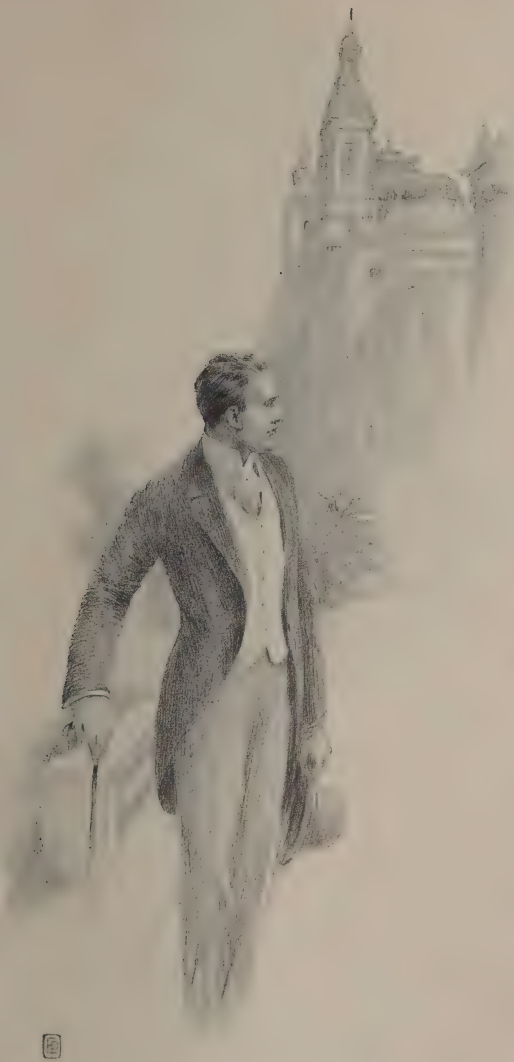
IN WHICH THE AMIABLE CHARLES PREPARES FOR AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE GODDESS OF CHANCE

DRESSED, shaved, clean and clean feeling, Charles left the hotel. He was a little at a loss. Where should he breakfast? A creature of habit, always on his first day at Monte Carlo he lunched *chez* Ciro — on the terrace if it were fine and quiet, in the restaurant but against the window if it were wet or grey. But a year had brought great changes. No longer was Ciro's what it was — for Ciro himself was not there. Charles had been told that he was living elsewhere, in a palace. It was very likely. Anyhow, he was gone. He had sold his restaurant to a syndicate — an English syndicate. Now, a syndicate may be all very well, but what was an English syndicate doing with a restaurant, anyway? Charles had nothing against it; in fact, he thought he knew some of its members; but how he did hate his habits being upset! He had lunched regularly, as I say, on arriving at Monte Carlo, in the Galerie Charles III, because he knew that Ciro would welcome him, and would tell him who had come back, and would give him a feeling of warmth. Besides, everybody walked in the Galerie before and after lunch and he used thus quickly to find his friends. A syndicate could n't provide him with all these advantages. No, indeed.

You may wonder why I appear to make such a fuss

about Ciro. Really, I don't. His disappearance was an affair of importance to Charles. Perhaps after all, though, he said to himself, it did n't so very much matter, because he was only here for a day or two, and likely would never come again. But it was also a matter of importance to all that world which amuses itself. Ciro knew. Ciro was a character. And character is dying out — even at Monte Carlo. A syndicate has no character; Cook's tourists are all as alike as two peas; I don't think it possible to distinguish one bourgeois German from another. Soon Monte Carlo will contain nothing but German bourgeois, Cook's tourists, the Ciro syndicate, and the various activities of the Hôtel de Paris. Charles thought all these things as he strolled on the terrace and wondered where all the smart people were. He had wondered that same thing every year since his first visit. Indeed, he thought so deeply about the Principality's decline, and so earnestly about the days that were coming and what he should have to do, and about Mr. Gorham, and, above all, about Alison, whom he should not see for a year, that no one spoke to him. Such friends as would have welcomed him thought he must be working out a system . . . or perhaps he had come yesterday, had chanced not to meet them, and had lost. . . . One does n't interrupt the reveries of the obvious loser.

Charles humbugged himself. He thought he was glad that he could be here only a few hours. Monte Carlo was n't what it had been. He'd breakfast, and then lose his money if chance so willed it, and go away. The sooner the better. But, again, where should he breakfast?



CAERLEON AT MONTE CARLO

He chose the Café de Paris.

As he lunched he continued his meditations. He could find nothing to be cheerful about. His mind revolved in a cage — Alison was at one end of it, Mr. Gorham at the other. There was no certainty anywhere. Mr. Gorham had disappeared; and even if he had n't, and even if he were still happy and successful, pink and eupeptic, in the Meurice, he was not necessarily an ally of Charles's. And as for Alison — he was n't to see her again for a year, and he was not to tell her of his love. If Mr. Gorham had n't let that cat out of the bag already, he was less likely to do so in the future. He'd have something else to think of when his captors had liberated him; and why should Alison remember him? If she'd liked him at all — well, she'd soon forget him. He could n't even tell her why he had gone away. What a fool he had been to give such a promise! Still, it was too late now to alter.

"*Un bon cigare, Monsieur?*" Charles hated restaurant cigars, but he took one to pass the time. He had a good mind to go across to the hotel, pay his bill, and go away. But where to? The Mauretania did n't sail for a week. Better stop here as long as his money lasted. And that reminded him: he must play seriously, on a method, if he played at all. This time it did n't matter whether he won or lost — or it did n't matter much. Charles had a fatalistic feeling about that couple of hundred pounds. Well, he'd not be a fool. If he could win, he would. He worked out what I believe the habitual, the "scientific," gambler calls a method of attack.

Two hundred pounds is five thousand francs. To begin with, for every expense he had while he was here,

such an expense as this lunch for instance, and tipping the cloak-room attendant, he'd employ that five thousand francs. No, not the whole of it, of course! I mean, he'd change one of the notes in paying his bill. In fact, in this he had a veritable system. For everything that he wanted he paid in gold; the change he put in a separate pocket. It spoiled his clothes, but it amused him to have kept something from the wreck when the game went against him. Getting back to the hotel, it was easy to tumble all the loose change — the half-louis, the five-franc pieces, and the sous — into his despatch-box, and to start again. That was detail number one. Detail number two was that whenever he won he would pocket his winnings — pocket them in a very real sense. Let me explain: he pocketed his winnings whenever he won — not all the winnings of any individual coup, but the net winnings of any one series of coups. The trouble with all writers about gambling is that they seldom, if ever, make their details clear. I'm going to make Charles's operations clear, even if I have to run this history into two volumes. Anyhow, I shall thus have the satisfaction of knowing that I must sell one copy; that it must have a place in Mr. Jessel's collection; and that, later, bound in leather, it will rest with its fellows, with a thousand other books, far less amusing, but all dealing with games of chance, in the Bodleian.

But to return. In the game Charles contemplated playing, one made a definite "attack" on the bank. One won — or one lost; but one's fate was usually not immediately decided. It is true one might win at the first coup — and in that case that "attack" would be at

an end, and so much would have been gained; but the first coup might be lost, and the second, and the third, and the fourth — and then everything depended on the fifth: if *that* went down, the "attack" had failed. When I spoke of Charles pocketing his winnings, I meant that he pocketed his winnings on each series of coups. He had, as I have said, two hundred and fifty louis. He had determined that with those two hundred and fifty louis he would attack the bank — just once if he lost, and, if he won, then he would go on playing until he failed in an "attack." His idea was to divide his capital into so many parts, so many louis to each stake. He thought of ten for the first, and, since he was in no mood for a small or piking game, of doubling up five times: ten, twenty, forty, eighty, one-fifty — one-fifty, because three mille notes is as much as you can stake on this kind of chance. But the worst of it was, that required a capital of three hundred louis, and he was fifty short of that sum. He would play indifferently, as the fancy seized him, on the dozens and the columns, but keeping always to the stakes he'd decided on. Few of my readers will need to be told that if at roulette you have ten louis on a dozen or a column, and a number turns up which is included in the dozen or column on which you have staked, you get your money back and twenty louis in addition. And that, accordingly, would be the result of hitting the right dozen or column at the first attempt. But if Charles lost the first coup and won the second, then, as on the second attempt he had staked twenty louis, he would obviously win forty louis. You must subtract from that forty the ten lost — the first coup.

Net result: a gain of thirty louis. That thirty louis he would pocket. If success were refractory for the second coup, you can work out for yourself the gain if it came with the third — and likewise if it came not till the fourth or the fifth. It is all very easy, and it does sound the simplest possible way of making money; but I beg you not to forget that at each coup it is always two to one against your choosing the right column or dozen, and, although it is five to two *on* your choosing it in five shots, five to two on chances, even when mathematically calculated, have an unhappy habit of coming undone. Moreover, there is always zero.

Charles had decided to play in this way because he thought it would give him more fun for his money, more excitement. His fate, if luck was against him, would soon be decided. There is no game in the world at which you can so quickly lose your capital as at roulette, if the luck is against you — especially, if, the habitual gambler would tell you, you are playing against the table, against the run. How often had Charles been bitten! One evening he remembered — one bitter evening. He had come across to Monte Carlo from Beaulieu, with a lady in whose villa he was staying. "We'll go over soon after breakfast," she had said to him. "I've got to try on a dress; afterward we'll play for half an hour — oh no, no more, — and then we'll get back in plenty of time for lunch." That day Charles had no money on him to speak of — and as he was to be in the place for so short a time, he refrained from getting any. Going into the Rooms with his hostess, he found that his capital was seven louis. He put three on the

first dozen. It turned up. He now had thirteen louis. Five of them he left in the same place. He lost. The eight that remained took their place. Again the first dozen turned up. He now had twenty-four louis. He noticed that all the three coups he had played had been in the third column. He put the whole of his capital *à cheval* between the first and second — in effect putting twelve on the first and twelve on the second. The first column turned up. Now he had thirty-six louis. That was enough, he thought: a gain of twenty-nine louis in five minutes. A drink, and then he would go and search for his hostess. Gamblers generally separate on entering the Rooms. It is considered more tactful. One is less embarrassed in winning, less excited in losing. But his hostess was losing. "Charles, dear, you can go back and lunch by yourself; I'll come when I've got back what I've lost or lost what I've got." Nothing Charles could say would move her. He hovered about, hoping she'd still encounter some decisive sequence. But her fortune was so-so. "Do go away," she said: "if you won't go back to the villa, go and lunch at Ciro's. Look for me here at two."

Charles did n't exactly see himself lunching alone in the circumstances, and he went out and walked about, bought a button-hole, had another drink and a sandwich — and came back at two. Still his hostess was rather losing than winning. She had come to one of those streaks in which good luck is just counterbalanced by bad. Nothing happened.

So Charles began to play again — largely out of boredom. I won't bother you with how he played — in

much the same way as he had done in the morning; and with the same success. But he won rather less as he was being more careful. At three he was another twenty-four louis to the good. But his friend even now would n't move. There she had been since eleven o'clock: she had n't missed a coup, and she had n't won a piece. Picking oakum was nothing to it. "Mrs. Gerald," he said, "I shall now walk up to Monaco and round the Rock. I shall be ashamed of you if you are n't ready when I come back. I'll come and take you to tea at four. If you are n't here, I'll expect to find you in the Atrium."

Charles did these things. "Yes, I'll come now," his hostess said; and Charles, who was both dusty and hungry, thought that they'd have tea and would then catch the first train. He found that his friend had other plans. They had tea at Madame Eckenberg's (Charles was to find later that Madame Eckenberg whom he had known so long was gone too), and as they finished he was told that he of course was to go back to Beaulieu, but that Mrs. Gerald would return to the Rooms. He knew her well enough to argue with her, and to ask her what was the net result of her day's labour. The argument was useless; and he found that having started her game with fifty louis, having remained at the table without a break for five hours, and having in effect played every coup for five hours, she now had forty-one louis left. Charles told her the story about the late Duke of Devonshire. He had been to Newmarket, and coming back met a friend. "Had a good day?" he was asked. "Oh, yes, quite — quite good," he replied cheerfully. "Won

much?" "No, but I just got round on the last race — I've neither lost nor won." "If you call that a good day, what's the good of betting?" his friend asked. What, indeed? The Duke seems — or so the story goes — to have thought the matter over; he never betted again.

The story left Mrs. Gerald cold. She was quite sure that she ought to go on playing. It is a form of self-deception to which the gambler, and especially the female gambler, is peculiarly liable. "Ought" is the word they use. If they don't go on they reproach themselves afterwards. So Mrs. Gerald returned, and Charles returned with her, and played a little and won and walked about and played a little more and won, and was generally bored. Dancing attendance on obstinate women was not an amusement after his heart. He'd never be induced to stop with anyone on the Riviera again! And he never has. For him the freedom of an hotel. Just now, because he was bored, he played in the boldest way. He'd put his hand into his pocket, by now fairly full of gold and crumpled *billets*, and dragging out as much as came would walk to a table, hand it to the *chef*, and announce the first two dozens or the last two columns. His luck was uncanny. If he lost, it was with some small stake; and with the next, a larger, he'd at once retrieve that loss.

The hours passed. Charles could n't get Mrs. Gerald to come home to dinner, nor could he very well go and dine by himself, so he hung about and talked to friends, and smoked cigarettes in the Atrium, and went out to look in the shop windows, and bought a fur stole for his sister. And then a kind lady, who preferred gambling to

music, let him occupy her seat for one act in the Opera, while she lost her money at *trente-et-quarante.* It was now ten o'clock. The Rooms closed at eleven. Charles went to Mrs. Gerald. "I've had no dinner, so I'm going across to Ciro's to get something to eat. I'll be back and in the Atrium just under where they put up the news at five minutes past eleven exactly." She answered with her approval impatiently, and he walked across to the Galerie. Finding himself alone in the restaurant, while he was waiting for his *foies de volaille en brochettes* and his half-bottle of 1889 Goulet, he thought he'd better find out how his money stood and at least arrange it. He was conscious, as gamblers sometimes (all too seldom) are, of a certain inconvenience in walking about with a heavy weight dragging at his pocket. One would hardly do such a thing in a London or Paris restaurant, but it was no extraordinary sight in Monte Carlo. He cleared out his pockets. First he subtracted the seven louis with which he had started, and then proceeded to arrange the gold or paper that remained over in separate heaps. There were three thousand franc notes, five of five hundred francs, and of gold one hundred and eight twenty-franc pieces — seven thousand six hundred and sixty francs: more than three hundred pounds, even after allowing for the exchange. Well, after all, the day had n't been badly spent; he need n't have been so bored, or so angry with Mrs. Gerald. And he'd bought a stole too.

The chickens' livers came and the champagne came, and Charles lingered over them. Having had so satisfactory a day, he was n't going back to the Rooms before

the last coup had been played. He'd give himself no chance of losing what he'd won. In fact, he'd make assurance quite sure and be a little late. He was — but Mrs. Gerald was n't in the Atrium. "The Opera is n't over yet, monsieur," Charles was told. He kicked himself for not remembering that on theatre or opera nights play does n't cease till the audience is liberated. He'd better go in and look for his hostess. After all, he need n't play.

There she was. The pile of gold in front of her was about the same size as it had been all day; the only thing that seemed to have shrunk was the player herself. She seemed to have lessened with fatigue. She saw Charles, and beckoned to him. "Look here," she said, "the last dozen has n't been up for fifteen times. Is n't that your game? Don't you want to play on it now?"

"Thanks, but I won't play," Charles answered.

With the next roll of the ball, nineteen in the second dozen appeared; with the next, zero; and then seven; and Charles congratulated himself that he'd paid no attention to Mrs. Gerald's suggestion. But ought n't he to, now, though? Was n't it squandering his mercies not to make something? The last dozen was certain to turn up in a coup or two, surely. Why not make a day's expenses?

The ball was rolling. Hastily collecting five louis from the mass in his pocket, he handed it to the croupier. "*Dernière douzaine,*" he announced.

"*Sept rouge impair et manque.*" Seven, a second time!

Charles did n't like it, but after all he should n't

expect the desired chance to turn up at the first time of asking. This time fifteen louis.

Number seventeen appeared.

So much the worse — but so much the better, as he was playing, when the last dozen did arrive. A thousand-franc note was his next stake. "*Tout va au billet,*" the croupiers called, and Mrs. Gerald looked up and smiled.

Zero again. Charles remembered having sworn mildly under his breath — swearing not at the loss of the money, but at his having played at all when he had so definitely decided not to. Two notes the next time — and again disappointment: Seven! Rapidly calculating he found he'd lost three thousand four hundred francs. Not so bad, considering how much he was still to the good. But he was in it now, and he'd have to win or break.

The maximum on a dozen is three thousand francs, and that was the sum that Charles next staked, putting at the same time all that remained in his pocket on *passe*, the numbers from nineteen to thirty-six. He thought himself rather clever in doing this. The last dozen covers the numbers from twenty-five to thirty-six. If it turned up he'd win in both places, — if it did n't, well, perhaps the stake on *passe* would give him another chance. For with its aid he was covering a further six numbers. Supposing that a number between nineteen and twenty-four appeared he'd lose on the dozen, but he'd win sixty-three louis on *passe*. That would make his capital one hundred and twenty-six louis — short of the biggest stake allowed — but still

sufficient, if it all went on the last dozen and was successful, to retrieve not all but most of his losses.

"*Premier rouge impair et manque.*" Number one had appeared, and Charles had lost all his winnings except for some small change and what he had paid for his sister's stole and his supper. "Something gained, anyhow," he said to himself philosophically.

The last three coups were now announced: "*Messieurs, les trois derniers.*" Charles had no longer any interest in the game; he did n't even watch Mrs. Gerald, who was staking religiously up to the very end.

And twenty-seven appeared — twenty-seven in the last dozen; and it was followed by twenty-five; and in the last coup of all came thirty-six!

Mrs. Gerald jumped up. "Come along. Let's get our things before the rush. I've won seven louis." And, with a rattling of bangles and of gold purses she hurried Charles to the Atrium.

But all this had happened several years ago.

CHAPTER XXI

COLD FEET

THERE was a very lengthy digression at the end of the last chapter. It did not take Charles so long to think of all these things as it has taken me to tell them. His "*bon cigare*" was finished. He paid his bill — turned his back on the Casino, and went for a walk. To tell the truth, although he assured himself that he did n't really care what happened to the last two hundred pounds he was going to risk at the game he had loved for so many years, yet he did have a feeling of dread. He was frank with himself, and he knew that if he went in and lost, he would come out again very depressed. He was n't likely to have many hundreds of pounds to spend in amusement for many years to come. While the *billets* remained in his pocket he had them; they represented so much potential comfort — and more than comfort. When they were gone he'd be down to the level of Sir Peter Bain: hotels where one paid so much a day, — everything included but comfort, — cheap meals, omnibuses, second-class tickets. Perhaps he exaggerated. Anyhow, he felt like postponing the ordeal. He went up to his room (only across the square: the Monte Carlo that matters is only a village, after all), filled his cigarette-case, and then walked up through the gardens and went in and exchanged greetings with Madame Aubanel at the Prin-

cesse; then he strolled on towards Mentone, spending a few minutes looking at the contents of the shop where Bain had found the pictures. There was no such luck for him. Such treasures might be there, but he had n't the knowledge to pick them out. And that reminded him. Why not walk to Mentone? It would do him good. He could look up Bain on the way.

"Yes, Sir Bain, he is in," the Italian porter answered. "In dining-room with his two friends."

Charles went in. This hotel that Bain had selected was about two miles away from Monte Carlo, but it might have been a hundred. Oh, how the atmosphere was different — and the people! In one corner of the dining-room sat a young English couple — obviously on their honeymoon; in another an English clergyman with a couple of vicarage ladies; there an elderly lady sat with an antimacassar carefully arranged round her neck, — or it looked like an antimacassar, — and at a long table was a whole Italian family at whose apparel and general appearance imagination boggles. Bain and his friends were near a window. Bain had a new suit on, and looked very neat and brushed up — he also looked worn-out. Next to him sat a big man — an American, an American novelist, it appeared afterwards. A long, loose-jointed individual. And on his other side was an old young man with an eyeglass — an unfortunate possession, because if there was one thing more than another Charles disliked in his fellows it was the wearing of a monocle. Naturally, as he wore one himself. It connoted in his mind all the affectations possible to man. He agreed with a certain negroid jour-

nalist: it was impossible to wear an eyeglass and to be sincere.

Charles had arrived just in time to put an end to a heated, a troubled argument. He supplied the solution. The others had arrived from Genoa that morning. The old young man had been assisting at the American novelist's first glimpse of Italy. Now they both wanted to go into Monte Carlo. Not to play — of course — but to look at it. Bain, on the other hand, wanted to go to Mentone. Like Charles, he thought exercise would be good for him. Charles did n't know him sufficiently well to realise that if the others had wanted to go to Mentone, he'd have wanted to visit Monte Carlo. A charming mind, but naturally perverse!

Charles, then, was to accompany Bain to Mentone; the others could please themselves.

An admirable place, Mentone, but rather full of the (comparatively) indigent invalid. One should visit it before Nice and before Monte Carlo — and even then it is best to see it not very long after sunrise, before its visitors appear. The inhabitants are like the place; they fit into the picture. They are n't German. Its beauty is different from that of Monte Carlo, and far, far greater than that of Nice. It is intimate and romantic. It makes the most exquisite piece of stage scenery in the world. Let me tell you that, if you have n't much time to spare from Monte Carlo and only drive over for the afternoon to Mentone in order to avoid the Rooms when they are at their fullest, there are two things you must not miss doing. In the first place, walk to the end of the break-

water and look at the old town therefrom, noting the terraced houses, built up one on top of another, that Mr. Maresco Pearce has saved in his water-colours from ultimate oblivion — for they'll come down one day, I suppose; and then go up to the English cemetery and enjoy one of the most beautiful views in the world.

But I am not writing a guide-book. I have, however, the slight justification that Charles and Bain did both these things; and then they thought of tea. "Let's go and have it at Cap Martin — at the big hotel," Bain suggested. "It costs no more than tea here, and one gets that fine view from the terrace."

It was evident that Charles was not to encounter the Goddess of Chance that afternoon, and, smiling at the second half of Bain's sentence, he willingly assented. Later on he learnt that his new friend's apparent preoccupation with the cost of things was a pose, a sort of pose. There had been a time when he had had to count every penny. "It's no use giving Peter any bigger allowance," his father had said; "he'll only spend it in pictures." And he was right. He did spend every penny he could save on pictures. Walking rather than taking an omnibus, doing without proper meals, he learnt in that best of all schools how unnecessary were most luxuries and how easily one could dispense with some necessaries. But mean — well, I used the word a little while back, but I did n't intend that it should be taken literally. He would spend money cheerfully enough — on the things that were worth while. Primarily they were a Manet, a Velasquez, a Cuyp — for examples; secondarily,

on the beautifying of the palace in which he lived — and that not for himself, but for some near posterity; thirdly, in one way or another on his friends. Mean! His was the real generosity. But even while his purse and his time and his energy were at everyone's disposal, he continued out of mere perversity to assist the legend of his meanness. I doubt whether in such matters his left hand did know what his right hand had done. And when success and honours came he remained exactly as he was. He would go from the palace of a prince (his own had greater treasures) with perfect happiness to the one-room lodging of some friend in Bloomsbury, or even to a villa. Yes, his own house was a residence out of the Thousand and One Nights. The hall seemed to be built of rare marbles, and then one saw a Paolo Ucello on the wall, and on the stairs a Sargent, — the gift of a few Carburghians more grateful than their fellows. In the rooms were Grecos and Goyas, Monets and Rembrandts, and curious jade figures and Chinese screens. . . .

But they were at the hotel.

If Monte Carlo is a part of hell, and Mentone a cross between paradise and a sanatorium, the large building that in effect makes a little village all by itself at the end of Cap Martin is a slice equally compounded of South Belgravia and the Tottenham Court Road. The English abound there — the very respectable English. The postal address is "*près Menton*": no one could object to that! You feel that it is all very safe. England has this way of seizing strategical positions. The Cap Martin Hotel is a sort of moral Gibraltar. Whatever

may happen on the other side of the Bay, it at least is solid for the conventions.

Charles was not very much amused by finding himself in this stronghold: he was afraid he might be pounced upon by some dowager friend of his — and sure enough he was. The waiter had brought the tea, and they were quietly drinking it, when they were joined by a well-preserved woman of say sixty, who had no sort of hesitation about breaking into their conversation. She told Sir Peter that she had known Charles since he was "that high," and she made up for her longevity by the particularity of her questions. Were they together? When did Charles come? She would obviously have liked to ask exactly who Sir Peter was. Evidently, she had n't the slightest idea. She'd look him up in that volume without which she never travelled; such people don't carry a "Who's Who." Their standards do not usually include achievement.

Then, having extracted all the facts she could, she turned to giving her own and the news of the hotel. The truth is, she was a sad case of intelligence gone to seed. Quite reasonable once, no fool, she had married one of Charles's father's neighbours, and he had altered her slowly into a snob, quickly into a parrot. To-day, the snob and the parrot battled together for mastery behind that glittering and middle-aged façade. What *did* they think? *Who* did they think had had the effrontery to come to the hotel yesterday? She named a certain Liberal statesman not at the moment loved by snobs, parrots, and the rich. "It's extraordinary what some people will do. You'd have thought he'd have kept away from here."

"But why should he? What's the poor man done?" Charles asked languidly.

Followed an exposition, an exposition that made little clear. The nearest Charles could get to the root of the matter was that, having stuck at nothing in his attempt to rob the rich and to pamper and pauperise the poor, the Liberal statesman should know better than to come among honest and Conservative people. Not everyone, however, was willing to sit down under this outrage. She was glad to say that two friends of hers had already "requested" the manager of the restaurant to move their table, since they were offended at their propinquity to this black sheep. Others were to do the same. Charles, who in certain directions had an extreme intellectual laziness and cared very little for politics, was content to leave it at that. Nor was Bain a politician. Still, he found himself glad that his American protégé was not with them.

Left alone at last, they walked slowly back by the shore-path toward Monte Carlo, and, breaking the laws of trespass, gained the Riva Bella.

"I had thought of going back to-night," Charles said, as they parted at the door. "I only came down this time to settle up some business, but I shan't go now, anyhow till to-morrow, and perhaps not then. Why don't you come over and lunch? We'll go up to La Turbie, if you like."

"I'll come," Bain answered; "but please give me the simplest lunch." It was either one of his affectations or else a very real souvenir of his days of hunger that he talked always as if his inside was on the verge of serious rebellion.

CHAPTER XXII

IN WHICH CHARLES DINES, AND LETS I DARE NOT WAIT UPON I WOULD

BY all the laws that govern the visitor's life in Monte Carlo, Charles ought to have gone that evening into the Rooms. He did n't; he did n't even go up the steps. He dined by himself, and then sat in the large hall of the Paris reading the belated second-rate sporting papers which, very likely with justice, the management appears to think sufficient for the taste and intelligence of its patrons. The truth was, he had n't got rid of his nervousness, his fear. He had still a hunch about his playing. There was an odd feeling about his stomach, as when he was a boy. But he read a lot of quite inaccurate information about the "markets" and the so-called favourites for the Lincoln and the National, and then wrote to his lawyer in Lincoln's Inn asking him to see him at quarter-past ten on Wednesday morning next, as he wanted to look into the exact position of his affairs, for reasons which he did not specify. It was characteristic of him to choose the very day of his departure for America for this interview. If he had to catch the midday train, it was certain that it could n't be unduly protracted; and having got the information he wanted, and having more or less shattered the equanimity of the excellent Mr. Pyeman

(Pyeman, Venables and Spalding, of course), he could bolt for his train.

Then he lay back, smoked his cigar, and watched with lazy inattention his fellow guests. He had dined early, so he was in time to see the gradual emptying of that restaurant which is perhaps the smartest and in some ways certainly the best — the best if they think it worth while to take trouble for you — in all that world that amuses itself. You could almost tell what the people were by watching them. And what a mixture! That very waddling gentleman with the black mustache, whose clothes fitted him too well, was a rapidly enriched South African millionaire — the richest Anglo-Alien we have. The women with him were his wife and his two daughters. The two men were Gentile parasites, far less admirable than their host. Followed an English peer. Charles wondered whether he or the millionaire was the least creditable representative of the Empire. He was alone, and he had evidently been drowning his cares — and now he would lose more of the money that he had n't got. And cheerful people came who were enjoying Monte Carlo as it should be enjoyed. . . .

Charles went to bed. He did n't think he wanted to see all these people again that evening, or their like. If he went into the Rooms he 'd come across them for sure, and he felt they 'd irritate him and put him off his game. More and mere timidity.

It would be well, however, before going to bed, Charles thought, to arrange his things for to-morrow's play. If he was to go down he would do so after making every possible preparation for success. Then he would

not have to reproach himself. He knew — as well as you and I do — that the chances in roulette are entirely fortuitous, but why not help chance as much as possible? He might so easily lose all his money in five coups — in five minutes, say; but, on the other hand, he might have a run of luck, and it behoved him to prepare to make it welcome. Nothing he knew was more irritating than, yielding to sudden impulse, to depart from the programme laid down — and to lose. To lose after consideration was all in the day's work; but to lose because of some whim — no, that made for depression. Charles's philosophy on the matter was a good deal confused. He could n't have formulated any very complete or satisfactory set of rules. He knew it was all chance, but still . . .

There were two things about which he was determined. He would play no other game than that he had decided on earlier in the day at lunch. He had two hundred and fifty louis. He'd play on the two-to-one chances, the dozens and the columns, and beginning with a stake of ten louis he'd double up in case of failure till the fifth coup. Then his stake would be a hundred louis. If he lost, so much the worse. He'd put his things together, keep his luncheon engagement with Bain, and catch the evening train. That was his first determination. The second dealt with what should happen if he were successful. If he had two or three winning coups his capital would be increased to at least three hundred louis. Whatever luck he had he would not play with more than three hundred. Each addition to his capital that brought it above three hundred louis should be withdrawn, put

aside, should go back with him to London. In fact, to put it briefly, he was willing to back himself to the tune of two hundred pounds, not to lose five times running. If he did, he'd quit. Garcia (was n't it?) made some millions of francs by backing himself not to lose three times running — but, if I remember V. B.'s book aright, he was playing on the even chances, and so did n't really run more risk than Charles proposed.

Charles's programme included another, a very practical, precaution. It is true that he had decided, sworn to himself, not to lose more than two hundred and fifty louis — or three hundred, if he won fifty to begin with. But flesh is weak. If one has the money in one's pocket, it is so easy to humbug oneself into thinking that in all the circumstances it is the stronger thing to abandon one's resolves and to follow one's star — or some such rot as that. It was so he lost all his winnings on the day that Mrs. Gerald kept him hanging about. He had made provision against such foolishness. In his trunk were three money-boxes carefully contrived to receive either notes or gold, and not till they were unlocked to give them forth. One of them went easily into his breast pocket. As he won — ah, if he won! — each sum above the three hundred louis would be dropped there and then into the box. It would stop in the box till he got to London. To ensure this, he folded the small and intricate key in a piece of paper, placed it in an envelope, and addressed it to himself at his club. Ringing for a chasseur, he sent the package at once to the post.

CHAPTER XXIII

A LITTLE PLAY, BREAKFAST, AND A JUSTIFICATION OF CONNOISSEURSHIP

CHARLES had the next morning when he woke an uncomfortable feeling that he had been disloyal to his love for Alison. The feeling was natural and perhaps justified. He had n't thought of her as much as he should. But, then, on the other hand, he had been doing things and seeing people, been busy, in fact; and, anyhow, his were at the most errors of omission. It could not be said that anyone else had even for one second taken her place in his heart. Why, he had n't spoken to a woman — save his ancient friend at Cap Martin — since he left Paris. He had n't even come across the chambermaid. And was n't he all the time working for her? No — perhaps not that exactly, but at least sloughing the skin of his old habits and interests in preparation for such work. It was Friday: that evening he'd have known her for a week.

The day was one of those on which Monte Carlo looked its very best. Cap Martin stretched out into an azure, untroubled sea; one's eyes followed with delight the exquisite shades and contours of the hills and mountains that reached in one unbroken line from Bordighera to Mont Agel. At one's back, the water in the harbour was a deep blue; Monaco lay basking beneath the lowering Tête de Chien just as on that day of which Tenny-

son wrote. Charles grew sentimental. He wished he didn't have to go into the damned Casino; he wished he could telephone to Bain to meet him at La Turbie at one, and that he could till then lie amid olive trees looking at the sky, thinking of Alison. But he must get on with his programme — and first of all he must get shaved. The good Bowles had not yet received his notice.

Throwing his windows wide open, Charles stepped out onto his balcony. It was nearly ten o'clock, and already there was a steady stream of people ascending the Casino steps. He thought it indecent. There were plenty of people — even people he knew — who would as regularly as clockwork join the crowd at the doors of the gaming-rooms a few minutes before they opened. As they were flung wide there would be a rush (Charles had seen it once — once was enough), and old men, old women, young men on furlough, the five-franc regulars, visitors from the North who had to prove the worth of their systems by one week's continual play — all would run awkwardly across the polished floor in the hope of securing a seat. He could see it all. They'd secure their places with their pencils, their cloak-room checks — and then they'd walk about and pretend not to have hurried. And at each table the money would be counted out — and after a time play would begin. To go so early might be convenient; certainly it was convenient to have a seat. But it was n't amusing — and luckily (although that made no difference to Charles), it was n't smart.

Charles's appointment with Bain was n't till the

eleven-fifty train. He would have liked to spin out the few things he had to do till then. But he began to feel that he was playing a coward's part; that as he had to play, it was imbecile to put it off any longer. He tried to understand, to analyse, his hesitations. In his experience they were so new. Why, indeed, should he hesitate?

In the bureau to which Charles had to go to secure his ticket of entry they went, as they always do, through the regular routine. He knew all the employees and they all knew him; but they pretended to believe that he might be some absolute stranger, and asked for some actual piece of identification, and then insisted on turning him up in various books. Ultimately, of course, he was given the white ticket which is only allowed to the habitué, and which would admit him for a month without further question. It carried other advantages.

The doorkeepers clipped Charles's ticket and greeted him with respect. He was so cheerful always; they were always pleased to see him again. Besides, he came back so regularly. And nothing disagreeable ever happened to him or to his friends. He entered: the atmosphere — although the rooms had hardly been opened an hour — hit him in the face. "What is it?" someone asked a witty lady; "what is the dominant perfume in that extraordinary *mélange?*" "Oh, I don't know," she answered; "I think I'd call it *esprit de corps.*"

Charles looked at his cuff. He'd written down there five numbers, all of them under four. They were the fruit of his morning's sentimentality. He'd actually taken Alison's name — Alison: A–l–i–s–o–n — and he'd

divided the letters of the alphabet into three parts: A to I, J to R, S to Z, and then he'd reckoned in which third each letter would fall. He'd written down the letters, and against them the numbers — A against 1; L against 2; and so on. The result was, 1, 2, 1, 3, 2, 2. He walked to the table that was nearest to him, and put his hand in his pocket. He had change — and incidentally, let me explain, he had less than the two hundred and fifty louis he'd reckoned on, for he'd paid for his lunch and his dinner of yesterday, so that he was three louis "shy," as they say in New York. Three louis more to make up before he'd have the desired three hundred.

The numbers on his cuff showed that his first stake was to be on the first dozen. He took out ten louis and handed it over the shoulders of some rather stuffy people to the croupier at the end of the table. It was just in time. The ball was rolling, *rien ne va plus* had been called. Charles had an absurd anxiety — as well he might, the stuffy people thought, for the ten louis were raked away.

This gambling was altogether too wearing, Charles felt — Charles who had seen his maximums go again and again where this paltry ten louis had gone, and had never turned a hair. His next stake was twenty louis, and he had to change a five-hundred-franc note. The stuffy people were full of solicitude. The twenty louis went on the second dozen. Charles controlled his emotion. He had a ridiculous desire, a disproportionate desire, not to lose five times running, not to finish the whole thing at once. *Vingt* — twenty. The stuffy people were truly excited. Charles took sixty louis — one note

and thirty-five louis in gold — from the croupier's hand. He was thirty louis to the good: now he had two hundred and seventy-seven. But the thing had to be repeated. He wished he knew whether he ought to start afresh with Alison's name from the beginning, or whether he should go on with the sequence; whether, that is to say, he should start next all over again with the first number in the sequence. He determined on the first course. His ten louis went on the first dozen — and he won. That made two hundred and ninety-seven louis in hand. If he could only win once more he would at least have saved something from the wreck — if wreck came. Ten louis again on the first dozen, and again it won. The weight was lifted from his spirit: he had now in his pocket three hundred and seventeen louis. Seventeen louis were pure gain. That was enough for the morning — even though it was n't in any case necessary for him to go off to meet Sir Peter Bain. It was true his heart was lightened, but nevertheless he'd gladly get outside into the sunshine. There was just time to step across to the Paris, leave his money, and go to the funicular railway.

At the hotel seventeen louis were carefully dropped into the box. At least now he could lose no more on this journey South than two hundred and thirty-three louis. He felt encouraged.

Bain's little laugh greeted Charles at the funicular terminus. "Well, what have you been doing? Have you lost a great deal?" Bain had to ask the usual question, and it was characteristic of him to put it in its most

pessimistic form. One is assured that there exists in Monte Carlo a whole colony of respectable people — English, American, French, German, Italian — who never want news of the kind, if for no other reason than because they studiously go through the season pretending that the gambling is an interest quite outside of the ordinary life of the place, something it is bad taste to mention. "Oh yes, there was gambling; but we had nothing to do with it," they say when they come home. At their luncheon and tea parties you never hear any talk of systems, or of runs, or So-and-So's great win, or of his cousin's even greater loss. A monstrous affectation. Besides, why should they choose Monte Carlo? There are so many other agreeable places. Monte Carlo is frankly a place for vicious people, or for the occasional, pleasant vices of people at other times virtuous. It owes most of its butterfly, its iridescent beauty to its immorality. Why not be frank about it?

But however impatient Charles might be at the question, he had to answer it — and he answered it, truthfully as it happens, but according to convention. The answer always comes pat: "I have n't played much, but I'm a bit to the good on balance." It is like being asked after one's health. If the inquirer is a friend of the heart he is answered truthfully; otherwise — In the South one always says that one is "a bit to the good on balance," and one always fosters sedulously the idea that one has n't played, that one is n't playing, much. "Oh, but, Mr. Caerleon, I saw you staking such a lot of money — and once or twice you won, and you were paid in several notes" — that is the kind of thing with

which ladies are apt to confound one's anxious attempts to show that one is n't playing this year. The answer is also according to rule: one smiles and says: "Yes, I'd just had a louis on a number that turned up, and I'd put the lot on a dozen, and won — it was the bank's money I was risking, of course. I'd never play that way with my own money: I have n't enough."

Going up in the train, Charles won five francs from Bain — and refused to take it. It's a dead easy way of making money. Let me explode it once and for all. After two thirds of the journey up to La Turbie the hill lessens and almost ceases — and then the road seems to dip downwards. You draw your companion's attention to the olive trees and the vines and the mule tracks, and then suddenly you say: "Hullo, this line goes down over there. That seems bad engineering. But I don't suppose it really does: it's an optical illusion, I expect." Your friend replies that it certainly dips. You deny it. He persists. You offer to bet five francs — or ten, or twenty, according to his means. When you get to La Turbie you prove that there is not even flat ground; that what you have both spoken of as a dip is in reality merely the lessening of the steepness of the hill. Pardon, gentlemen who live on this device, that I have given it away. Exercise your ingenuity afresh.

There are many people who, going to Monte Carlo, never go near La Turbie. Theirs is a great loss. They miss a view unsurpassable in its kind. And there are people who go up to La Turbie to lunch, but who never look at the very old-world Italian hilltop village which nestles under the ruin of the tower Augustus built. Bain

had seen so many Italian villages that he did n't want to be bothered, but Charles insisted that they should visit everything (like tourists — and perhaps for him it would be the last time) just as if they had never seen it before, the while their lunch was being prepared.

"I've ordered a plain fried mostelle and some Vichy water for you, Bain. You told me you wanted very little and that quite simple."

"I ought n't to eat even that," Bain answered; "but then I need n't eat any dinner."

At table Bain fell on the *hors d'œuvres*. There were certain very indigestible preparations of shrimps and button mushrooms covered with mayonnaise, and there were prawns. Charles said nothing. You can't quarrel with your guest's good appetite. For himself he had ordered a *langouste Américaine*. It came — and at the same time came the modest mostelle for Bain.

"What's that you've got there? It looks good," Bain asked.

"It's crayfish — and I ordered it for myself because I'm hungry; and when you're hungry, it's the best breakfast dish there is. It's almost too rich, though. They always put such an awful lot of things in the sauce."

"Give me some of that; after all, I won't have any mostelle — if you don't mind."

"I don't mind — I'm delighted. There's plenty for two. But what about your small appetite and your bad digestion? Don't blame me afterwards."

"No, I won't. Besides, it's ridiculous to come to a good restaurant and only to have the kind of food you

can get in your own house. It's a waste. I will have a little more of that sauce. What I never can understand is, why people want to come to a place like this — or to the restaurants down there" — he indicated Monte Carlo, which lay beneath them. "Why, I know a man who's poor and very fond of pictures, and yet he spends more on his stomach in a month than I spend in a year. I tell him, if only he'd be sensible and eat at A.B.C. shops, he'd save so much money that he could have all the modern pictures he wanted. Still, if one is here it's rich food one ought to have. I can get fried fish at the Riva Bella."

Charles tried to explain that good food and good wine were an end in themselves. Bain, happily mopping up the rich sauce of the crayfish with fragments of bread, refused to see it. Nor would he drink wine. "My doctor says I'd better not — unless it's champagne."

The *agneau de lait* with which Charles continued his own lunch did n't look exciting enough to tempt Bain. The waiter offered him some early peaches. "I would like a peach," he said — and he ate two. Afterwards he asked what they cost, and nearly fell off his perch when he learnt.

"I did n't take return tickets," Bain announced. "I thought we might walk down to Monte" — he had that unhappy trick of abbreviating the name of the place; it was his one vulgarity.

Such a plan suited Charles down to the ground, but he felt it was his duty, that anyhow it would be discreet, to remind Bain of the facts: "But did you ever do it? I have. I should like to again — but, after all, it's only a

mule track when it is n't a flight of irregular steps. I thought you told me you had to take great care not to tire yourself? You'll be more than tired when you get down."

Bain smiled his most charming smile. "I know, but I must take some exercise after such a breakfast."

The path from La Turbie to Monte Carlo takes a bit of finding. As the crow flies the one place is not, I suppose, more than a mile from the other, but they are in different worlds. The kind of people who would ordinarily want a decent road use the expensive funicular railway. So the peasant has to walk — for the best of all reasons, that, even if he wanted to, he could n't drive. He walks, either alone or with his mule, down the side of those mountains that fall from the higher Alps into the sea. The path is quite primitive. However, Charles and Bain found it — and started off gaily enough. At least, such exercise is good for the liver.

Half-way down the hill Bain "cracked." Leaping, so to speak, from crag to crag, their pace had been too furious. He had to rest, and they sat down under a cypress and began to talk. Bain was restive. He was put out by a letter he had received that morning. His extraordinary successes had made him too many enemies. After all, it is n't amusing for the grand seigneurs, the pomposos, of the art-dealing worlds to have their opinions first questioned and then disproved again and again by someone so much younger and, according to their standards, so much less well equipped. They could smile at, forgive, even encourage small victories,

but when it came to Bain's picking up a forgotten but exquisitely fine Velasquez from under their very nose — well, things became embittered. Of course he was mad. An interesting, even a beautiful piece of painting, Spanish certainly, — but to call it Velasquez was quite absurd! It had cost Bain three thousand two hundred guineas at Christie's — about five times as much as he would have had to pay if some people had n't shared his belief, or at least thought that the fact that he evidently so much wanted it was enough to go on, was justification sufficient for their bidding against him. And in the sequel, Beruete and all the English critics whose opinion was of the slightest value had come round. Of course it was a Velasquez. Cleaned, and with its qualities patent to everyone, it had been the *clou* of the Spring Old Masters Exhibition — and now it had been sold for a huge sum — some scores of thousands of pounds. That, indeed, was the chief cause of offence. For some reason or other, difficult to account for, but due, perhaps, to the interest of his transactions, when Bain did sell a picture everyone was cross. I do believe that even those exquisite connoisseurs, the members of the Burlington Fine Arts Club, occasionally sell something, something they no longer care for, or something which will command a high enough price to enable them to buy another picture, another bronze, that they covet more than that they are parting with. And it was the fact that he, too, was guilty of this last, which was both the secret of Sir Peter Bain's success and the cause of his unpopularity — where he was unpopular. He had, now and again, to throw this picture or that to the wolves.

"Half these people who spend their time pitching into me — yes, being jealous of me if you like, although I don't know what they have to be jealous about — don't really understand. Some of them are dealers, of course, and I do, perhaps, now and then interfere with their market. Not nearly as much as they think, though. They exaggerate. But it's the critics who worry me most. They don't seem to see that when they write about painting they are expressing themselves in one way, the way that is open to them. I can't write about painting. I express myself by acquiring pictures. That's my way of criticism, my method of expression. And it wants some courage, some conviction. If one's a millionaire and one's spending a tithe of one's income — or capital — on a picture gallery, one can afford a few mistakes. When you're like me and have n't any money, you can't. A critic sees a painting he thinks is a Gainsborough and he says so in print. Well, it is or it is n't. People forget his views if later on it's proved to be a Hayman. Anyhow, he can always, even against proof, persist in his opinion. But if I go — and it's true of any real collector — to Christie's, say, and see that behind a lot of dirt and varnish there's a Titian, well, I have to buy it, cost what it may. I've got to possess it. I have the collector's passion."

"A sort of lust to possess," Charles hazarded.

"Yes, that's it. One wants the thing so much that one can't do without it. And having bought it, even though one 's taken it home and found it is n't what one thinks, yet one can't avoid paying for it — and generally for me the only way to pay for it is to sell something

else. If only they knew how I hate selling — how I even hate having to sell the paintings I'm tired of. I don't understand selling. That's my great trouble. I've got to buy pictures without money and to sell them without conviction — without the kind of conviction, I mean, that makes one a good salesman. It's true I sold that Velasquez for twenty times what I paid for it, but that was almost obstinacy. I hated its going — but it just had to go. I stuck to it as long as I could. But if I had n't been able to stick to it, if I'd had to sell it a year or two ago, I'd have had to be content with a quarter of the price I've just got. One gets a good price for a painting when one can do without selling it. But I'm rambling away from my point. I do think that a collector who does n't sell things is almost a fool; he's stagnating. Sometimes I sell because I'm out of conceit with a painting; more often because I've got to pay for something I've wanted more. The root of the matter is, that when I see a painting, or a vase, or a screen that I know is good and is of the kind I like, I am no more able to resist buying it or bidding for it — even beyond prudence — than I can avoid being hungry."

"But if and when you sell, you sell at a profit. And anyhow you don't sell often."

"Often enough — or not often enough. It depends on the point of view. And as for the profit, I generally make something, but the dealer I sell to generally makes more. I was telling you of the Hobbema I sold with some other paintings at a time when I had to have five thousand pounds to pay for the Corots. I got rid of it for something less than three hundred pounds. Within a

week Musgrave sold it to Lord Capel for three thousand five hundred. I did n't complain. Another time I wanted fifteen thousand pounds — had to have it. I wrote to a man in the Rue Lafitte and offered him three paintings. He telegraphed that he was on the way over to look at them: he came all the way to Carburgh, and he gave me twenty-two thousand pounds for the three. Eight thousand I took in paintings — a couple of Manets that are in Carburgh now were among them; yes, I gave them to the gallery. A week later old Gandolpho came to one of my teas and told me that the Rue Lafitte dealer had just sold such an interesting Titian for six hundred thousand francs. That was one of the three paintings I'd sold him. Now, there you do have very much of an instance either to support or to confound (according to the way you look at it) all the people who say I'm a dealer in disguise, that it 's nonsense for me to pretend I'm not one. Of the twenty-two thousand I took, as I've said, eight thousand in Manets, and so on, every one of which I've given to Carburgh: the balance went to pay for my Velasquez and for a lot of Barbizon paintings I'd also given to Carburgh. And, as you know, the Velasquez has recently had to go the same road — and all I have in the bank is an overdraft, and all the satisfaction I receive is letters from its manager saying that the overdraft must be reduced!"

"Anyhow, I suppose a lot of the Carburgh people are grateful."

"I hope so — some of them are, I know. Some are n't. They used to have meetings of the local body when I first offered them the pictures. I'd made one condition

— that they'd provide a gallery. 'Why should we take all these foreign paintings?' they asked. 'Mr. Bain ought to patronise local talent first. Besides, these French Impressionists are n't to everyone's taste.' They seemed, some of them, to think I had some huge swindle on — although no one ever explained why I should begin my swindling by divesting myself of scores of thousands of pounds of property. Then, although they'd undertaken to keep up a temporary gallery, I had, I found, to pay all the bills. Somehow or other there was always a hitch about getting the accounts passed. And they have n't built a gallery yet — and don't look like building one."

"You'd better take the pictures back."

"No, it'll be all right by and by. That's the one thing I've worked for, the one thing I've cared about. It'll all have its effect. Carburgh men will have good paintings to see, and if they paint they'll paint well."

"But how did you begin, Bain?"

"Shall I really tell you? At home when I was a boy I never satisfied anyone. None of the ordinary work interested me. Pictures were the only things I cared about, and naturally it never occurred to my people that I'd ever be able to turn *that* taste into a livelihood. But I had a stroke of luck. I had an aunt, Lady Morrow, who knew one or two people important in the art world. She told them about me and my passion for painting and asked how I could use it to advantage. Luckily they were sensible, and, instead of suggesting a Museum post — which I dare say I'd never have got: there are examinations! — they suggested I'd better go into a dealer's

and do any work to begin with that came to my hand. So a place was found for me through my aunt's influence with old Capulet, and he both made me a slave and taught me my trade. I was paid a pound a week — and lived on it, and saved too. It was the saving that ruined my health. I did n't have enough to eat. At any time I'd walk five miles rather than waste sixpence on a train. Every now and then I'd spend a pound or so on some picture, too unimportant for Capulet, that I'd find in some old shop or bid for at one of the smaller sales. Then I'd clean it and send it back to be re-sold. I got a Weenix in that way for five pounds and sold it directly afterwards for sixty. So things went on. I was a sort of skeleton. I had no nerves, no assurance, no flesh, no friends. I'd cross over to the other side of the street rather than meet anyone I knew. My life was in the picture galleries and in the dealers' and auction rooms. After a time people got to know about me — and I was offered a post as buyer for another dealer. There I had two pounds a week. To be actually buyer, even for a small house — that was joy. And I did buy! I paid five pounds for a Gainsborough that I found in a bicycle shop at Norwich. My employers sold it for fifteen hundred. But — well, I need n't bother you with the details: we differed, and I was my own master, but this time with a few pictures and a couple of hundred pounds. I took a tiny place of two rooms in St. James's, and was a real dealer for a little while. I never went near anyone; I left people to come to me. Luckily they came — and I made thirty thousand pounds in a couple of years. I thought that was a fortune. I closed the place and became

enthusiastic about a gallery for Carburgh, and began to make a collection of my own. Now and then I made a mistake. But with Carburgh like a large hole in the pocket in which I keep my money, I can't afford to make them nowadays. In the meantime, if you lock me up I dare say you'll stop me buying pictures, but short of that no one will succeed, I'm afraid. When I like a thing I've got to have it — either for myself or for Carburgh. The result is that some of the dealers have exalted me, quite unjustly, into a kind of scourge and terror. One of the funny things, though, is that if you want a thing hard enough it almost always comes about that you get it, — pictures, I mean; I don't know much about anything else. The fates seem to combine to give it you. I remember once walking into So-and-So's studio" — he named a portrait-painter easily the first of his time — "and seeing there wet on his easel a just finished painting of Lady — oh, well, I won't tell you her name. 'I wish I could have that,' I said. 'I wish you could,' the painter answered — 'the more so that my sitter does n't like it.' I thought of trying through a friend to get her to sell it me. 'I won't even ask her,' he said; 'it's a present from the painter; she could n't sell it.' That sounded conclusive. Four years later I met the woman herself. I took her in to dinner. I told her I wanted her portrait. At first she was indignant — but Carburgh has it now."

"Tell me one more story," Charles said, "and then we ought to get on. It's not too warm or too dry on these stones."

"One of the most amusing things that ever happened

to me was when one of my friends near Salisbury wrote to me that he'd decided he must have his wife painted by Mancini, and would n't I come down to spend the week-end and arrange how it should be done, and help him with a letter that would induce Mancini to do it. I went — and we wrote to Mancini. I must tell you that it was n't so much a portrait of his wife he wanted as *a* Mancini — she'd already been painted by Furze. He wanted a Mancini in the house. Monday came, and he asked me to let him drive me into Salisbury an hour before my train went, as he wanted my advice about a bureau that a furniture dealer had offered him. We went. I liked the bureau, and he arranged to buy it. Settling details kept him a moment. I walked about the shop. It's always worth while. One never knows what one may find. I saw a painting extraordinarily vivid in colour stuck away at the back in a corner. It was surely — yes, it certainly was a Mancini, a good Mancini. My friend was speaking to his chauffeur. 'Where did you get this?' I asked the dealer. 'Oh, that thing, that's nothing; I bought all the contents of the nursery at the big house at Shrewley: that was among them.' 'What do you want for it?' 'Want for it! I'll take ten shillings and be glad.' I gave him his ten shillings just as my host returned. The best of the story is that he'd seen the picture, even looked at it — it had n't struck him that it was out of the common. Certainly the name of Mancini never occurred to him in connection with it. And it was n't till he heard that it had come from Shrewley and he'd told me that the Baskombes lived there that, with my reminder that Mrs. Baskombe

was one of Mancini's first patrons, he remembered that the painter had stopped almost at his door for months. Anyhow, my new Mancini was a better one than the one ultimately painted for him. Carburgh has mine. Eyes and no eyes, of course. My friend liked paintings well enough, but he could n't be sure a painting was good unless it had a label."

"Well, you can never tire of such a life. It can't be dull."

"You're right; it's not dull. But it's wearing — and it's jolly ungrateful, and too exciting sometimes. But the whole thing is my life. Anyhow, I've got now an enormous amount of practical knowledge without, as so often happens, my individuality going. My knowledge has n't made me a machine."

Charles did n't say so, but he thought as he got up that Bain was right, that if by individuality he meant, as he must mean, character, he certainly had enough and to spare. He glowed with character, individuality, temperament — all subordinated to a passion for painting, a passion that was consuming him.

The day was drawing in when they almost limped into Monte Carlo. Bain would n't stop and dine. He gave Charles tea and then departed, worn-out, in a tram-car. He had refused to take a carriage.

CHAPTER XXIV

NIGHT THOUGHTS

THAT night Charles tossed to and fro on his bed. Whether it was that his walk down from La Turbie had been too much for him, or that he had gone to bed too early — for nowadays he thought rather of Alison than of amusement when midnight approached — or that his gambling, the last gambling of his life, as he called it, had upset his nerves, he did n't know, but he certainly could not sleep. He rolled from side to side in the search for rest and a cool place.

His gambling that evening had not been dramatic, it had n't even been exciting. He'd dined first with two friends and had then gone into the Rooms quite casually — casually, because he was beginning to feel that after all there was n't any reason why he should gamble at all. Why not make sure of keeping his money. Two hundred pounds was a useful sum whether in Europe or in America. It would make rough paths smooth. And then, too, it represented his only capital. Mr. Pyeman was n't likely to be amenable to the extent of making him any advances. That was n't his way, and particularly it was n't his way with Charles, whom he respected just as much as it was necessary and seemly to respect a younger son. Charles was n't exactly the type of young man who won his respect — nor had Charles tried to win it.

So why gamble? Perhaps he would n't. But getting into the Rooms and looking at one of the tables he was struck with the fact that the dozens were running intermittently, that there were no "sequences" — that the same dozen did n't succeed itself again and again, I mean. To play for such sequences was one of Charles's favourite games. Of course — and no one knew it better than he did — the sequence of dozens occurs in the long run just as often as it should, just as often and no oftener. The mathematical average always rights itself. There was in reality no more reason for playing for a repetition than for a change. But logic told Charles one thing and his prejudices told him another. And so, seeing that the dozens had been intermittent — oh, the jargon of the tables! — he began to play for their repeating. By good luck repeat they did, and so Charles won, and went on winning — not the larger sums he was prepared to risk, his stake never exceeding forty louis, but respectable sums which, finding their way to his breast pocket, began soon to make the box he carried very heavy. After half an hour, although he had kept no record, he had the certainty that it contained more than three hundred louis. So he'd at least doubled his capital, and even if now he lost five coups running, he'd have an easy mind and could return to London with equanimity. That was why he went to bed.

I suppose the truth was that in these days Charles's spirit was in a ferment. He was not used to being in love, not really in love. And it had altered his character. He'd never had anything of high seriousness to think of hitherto. His own comfort, yes, of his reading, his pleas-

ant interests, his friends — but not of the future, not all the time engrossingly of one woman's eyes, of the place he longed for her to share with him through all the years to come. Now he had to worry in a different sense from the way he had worried in the past about ways and means. And he had to cut loose from all his past life and to go across the Atlantic, to live among people whom he would not understand, and who would not understand him, to seek for work and to do it — or to fail. Charles could walk in the sun, he could talk to Bain, he could gamble, but nothing could shut out these thoughts.

What worried Charles most persistently, the question that occurred again and again, was what work he was to do? How could he best hope to make good? Was n't the whole thing rather a fool's errand? And, after all, had Mr. Gorham held out any reasonable hope of his getting any work? He was neither of an age nor of the kind of training that he could hopefully take the first job that offered itself. He had a vague idea that the conventional thing to do was to arrive in New York with half a crown in your pocket and then work up from that. That sort of thing was all very well for the last generation. Nowadays one was handicapped in all sorts of ways. Why, one even had to arrive with ever so much more than half a crown — with twenty-five dollars or some such sum. And one had to show it. Perhaps, though, that did n't apply to the first-class passenger. But he'd be handicapped in being a first-class passenger too. If one was looking for a job in London, Charles had always heard, one should wear one's best

clothes, be particular about one's hat and one's boots. Apparently, though, his best clothes were n't going to help at all when he reached New York. Contrariwise. He supposed Mr. Gorham was a typical captain of industry, and he had n't had any hesitation in declaring his prejudices against Charles's Bond Street vestments. He wondered whether he ought to search in London for the true American cut. Perhaps it could be found in the shops that flanked the Hotel Cecil.

But no, he did n't think he'd achieve anything by that kind of ignoble compromise. He'd vowed that he'd stick to his eyeglass. He'd stick to his clothes too, and he'd use just as many or just as few Americanisms in his speech as he could pick up naturally and without effort between Monaco and Sandy Hook. He'd heard of Sandy Hook. . . . And then he began to plan out his procedure when he got there. He tried to remember what he'd been told of the place. He'd lots of friends — acquaintances too — in New York and Washington. Should he look them up? No. He would n't even tell them he was there. They'd interfere with business — whatever business it was. The men and women that Charles knew would not assist serious pursuits. He'd been in Berlin once, on a quite serious errand — to see its pictures. One of his cousins was an attaché at the Embassy. As a consequence Charles's visit to Berlin was from the point of view of painting an entire failure. Besides, the kind of people, English and American, who formed the society easily accessible to Charles in New York would n't understand what he'd come over for. Assuredly they'd laugh at the idea

of his working. Perhaps they'd think he was searching for an heiress. At least in that respect his hands were clean. Likely by the end of the spring he'd have more money to his name than Alison's father. Perhaps that was the one cheering factor in the situation. He'd have the greater chance.

Now it was Friday night. In five days at this hour he'd be out on the Atlantic. At the most he could only stop three days more here in the South. Twenty-four hours would take him back to London. Should he decide to gamble no more? Should he go back to Paris by the early morning train and, in spite of his determination, see Alison again? He'd be breaking no actual promise if he did. Perhaps he could help about Mr. Gorham. It did n't sound likely though. Mr. Gorham was sufficiently tied up. No, to go back to Miss Gorham after her father's message would hardly be playing the game. She had n't written to him, but there was nothing to prevent his writing to her, to give her first the date of his passing through Paris, when he'd tell her he'd look on the chance for a letter at the Chatham, and then an address in New York, that, if she would only take the trouble, he might have news of her father. That, apart from everything else, would be polite.

Charles turned on his light, rose and wrote at once. He told Alison he was returning by Monday's *luxe*. Now he was happier. He could sleep. The morrow could take care of itself. In no case now could any disaster threaten. He could n't even lose the money he'd brought down. His next, his real ordeal would not begin for another eleven days.

CHAPTER XXV

IN WHICH IS DEMONSTRATED THE DULNESS OF GAMBLING, AND AN AWFUL EXAMPLE IS EXHIBITED

IT was daylight when Charles woke — not naturally, but because the blinds were being blown to and fro by the wind. The sea was all white horses. The mountains that yesterday were razor-sharp against a blue sky were to-day hidden in mist. The rain was beating in at the window. A day in which Monte Carlo looks its worst. It was too early for any visitor to be abroad in the square below. A few gardeners were working at the flowers, a sleepy policeman seemed to be all waterproof cape, there was a tradesman's cart. It was n't amusing. Days like this were good for the administration or the Société des Bains de Mer. Certainly one could n't bathe. The bathers would come and gamble. Charles wondered if anyone had ever been known to bathe during the season at Monte Carlo. Again the impulse came to him to go away, to go somewhere else. But where? Besides, perhaps there would n't be a seat in the train. No, here he was, here at least he could pass the time, here he had friends and acquaintances to whom his presence was natural. He would take tickets for the *luxe* for Monday night. Bowles should go with him. He 'd be wanted to unpack and to pack in London. After that Charles would be servantless.

Having shut out the gale, Charles went back to bed, and slept again.

The day had n't improved when Charles woke a second time. It is a mistake to suppose that such days, wind-swept, cold, wet, are rare in the South. They arrive too often. And when they come they often repeat themselves. One may come to Monte Carlo in any one of the three first months of the year and find grey skies and for a fortnight see no sun. One may. On the other hand, it is not likely. As probable is it to come and see no cloud through two weeks, and to return welcoming the clouds that seem to wait the arrival of the Folkestone and Dover boats. The worst of it is that in Monte Carlo rain and cold wind leaves the visitor so utterly without resource. Most of the hotels make no adequate provision for their guests' recreation. Writing, reading, billiard-rooms — they hardly exist. The visitor is supposed to have come to gamble. It is true there's a theatre and an opera — but they don't occupy the day, and tickets are not easy to obtain. And there is a picture gallery which has a small stage where the dancer of the moment may pass an hour of the afternoon. It is extraordinary that having a picture gallery it has never occurred to the powers to have an exhibition of pictures — an exhibition of real pictures, I mean. Then there is the train to Nice. But what, I ask you, is there to do in Nice? There are cheap shops as well as dear. That in itself is a relief. But one cannot turn cheap shopping into a permanent pastime. Nor can one look into the windows of the jewellers and dress-

makers of the Place Masséna in the rain. Remains the Casino. . . .

So Charles found. All the morning he pottered about his room. He made lists of the things he'd want to take to New York, lists that he'd mislay before he reached Marseilles; he wrote to a few friends; he telephoned to Bain to ask if he were worn-out, and was told that he was still asleep; he wrote down the numbers suggested by Alison's name once more on his shirt-cuff; he prodded the contents of his pocket money-box with his paper-knife that they might be forcibly induced to take up as little room as possible, and so seem to invite additions; he read the entertaining Monte Carlo "Messenger"; he explained to Bowles that in three days his wages would be paid, a present would be given him, and he would be needed no more. But the day did n't pass. Even so, it was n't an hour at which he could decently lunch. Remained the Casino. . . .

To the Rooms, then. Charles found them crowded, uncomfortable, damp — steaming, indeed. Nice had come to Monte Carlo for recreation. Charles did n't like it. You see he'd vowed to himself to play in one way only, and as a consequence all the possible fun had evaporated. No longer could he go to a table and plank down a handful of louis on some casual chance. No, he had to follow a definite routine. Ten, twenty, forty, eighty, one-fifty. He found himself repeating the figures over and over to himself. It was a great bore. The idea that the whole thing was either important or amusing had receded into some recess of his mind. He looked at all these people stretching out grubby paws to place or to

withdraw five-franc pieces, and his gorge rose. He wondered whether he could n't hire a hall just on the other side of the border, in France, — in Monte Carlo Supérieur, or Beau Soleil, whatever it is called, — and deliver lectures on the absolute folly of gambling even in a place where, as far as one can make out, the gambling is fair. Fair? He doubted whether his hearers would think it fair if he could only get it into their heads that every hundred francs they put on the table was worth, even before the ball had started rolling, only ninety-seven. "Take it off while there is time," he'd have liked to have called out; "take it off while it is still worth a hundred." But it would be useless. The gambler and the novice would both answer: "Take it off! Certainly not. It may be worth two hundred." Charles saw himself billed to deliver two lectures at 3 P.M. punctually on Saturday and Sunday. He'd have no time for more. His subject should be "The True Function of Zero in the Modern State." Could n't he get all the people to understand that whether they played carefully or carelessly, whether they had systems or followed impulse, the end was always the same? Zero took its percentage. At least three per cent of every penny staked on the board. . . .

But while he had been thinking he had been watching the numbers coming up at the table at which he was standing. If he had been backing what he called in his own mind — a little sacrilegiously — the Alison sequence, he'd have fared ill. He'd have been cleaned out, cleaned out twice. Perhaps this was the time to

begin. Ten louis went on the first dozen. . . . Charles was gambling again.

Happily he gambled with success — with success and almost without excitement. When it was time to go to breakfast the box was so full that he could not even get another louis into it. So much the better. And it was good luck. But notice, please: it was always at the beginning of every sequence five chances to two against his being beaten by the bank, and luck just now was on his side. As easily might it be against him. It is not an experiment that I should recommend. Nor would Charles. Still, I cannot pretend that he bothered much about that side of the matter when, back in his room, he took out the heavy box, shook it to see if it made any noise of coin against coin (it was too full for that, as a matter of fact; the amalgam of paper and coins was too intimate), and then, reassured, packed it away between the pieces of a suit of clothes. That was the box of which the key had already gone to London. He took out another, its twin, locked it, wrapped up the key, and addressing it, sent it to join its fellow in the porter's lodge of his London club.

I am as tired of describing all this gambling of Charles's as Charles was of the business itself. It was n't gambling — or it was n't gambling as he understood it. He knew what the odds were, and he kept laying them, and, fortune favouring, he kept winning. Not once since he'd reached the place had he reached his maximum stake. But there was n't any fun. There was no giving way to impulse. Not for him the feverish joy of

bringing off an *en plein* — which is the gambler's slang for the backing of a simple single number. He could n't even experiment with a *transversale*. He'd have broken faith with himself if he'd put a louis on an even chance. Charles came to the conclusion that the Rooms were too dull to be dangerous, and that the gambler's day, marked out by meals, punctuated by drinks, was the stupidest in the world. He had thought otherwise before he had known Alison — he had thought otherwise even on the days when the mountains were crowned with grey clouds, and when as to-day the Rooms steamed with the dampness of the votaries of chance.

And then lunch. There can be no function in the world duller than that of lunch or dinner in a restaurant of the first order when no appetite is brought to table. And there is not much appetite in Monte Carlo. How indeed can there be? The visitor overeats and takes no exercise, takes no exercise and overeats. He overeats because a certain number of dishes are the fashion — and they are rich dishes because the restaurateur can't charge big sums for simple food. The sensible people are those who make a point of walking every day to Beaulieu or Mentone or La Turbie, and who refuse to be seduced into eating more than they need. The atmosphere of the Rooms takes away appetite, too, and destroys the spirit. In the old days one had a long night in which to recuperate. Gambling ceased at eleven; the restaurants closed soon after. Now the Rooms are, generally speaking, open for another hour, and they start an hour earlier than they did; and the restaurants — they stop open just as long as people remain in them.

So Charles went to an unhappy lunch. I ask you how can one eat eggs or fish and a tournedo when for a couple of hours one has done nothing but hang about in an atmosphere one can cut with a knife? Pretending to eat, he consoled himself with the memory of his full money-box. But he almost wished that he had no longer any available capital with which to play. He had been playing in the same spirit as that in which he now cut pieces off the meat on his plate — without any zest. The truth was, this visit to the South, although it had been profitable, was a mistake. Monte Carlo is no fit theatre for a man in love. He could no longer throw himself into the life of the place. What last year had been amusing this year had no attractions. A man in love had the conventions to regard. He even found himself avoiding his friends. They belonged to a past that was dead — or dying.

There was Bain, of course. His interests were not offensive; they were actually amusing. Charles once more turned to him in his dulness. He telephoned. No, Bain would n't dine with him — he could n't. "But I do wish you'd dine with me, Caerleon. I've two men coming to dinner. Where? I don't know. You tell me. Yes, that'll do. And please, like a good chap, do go and order the dinner for me, and the wine. You see, I don't know anything about food." Charles did n't welcome the idea of ordering a meal someone else was to pay for, but it would all help to pass the time.

Bain's friends were not particularly artistic. They were the kind of people whom one knows in Monte

Carlo, asks to dinner in Monte Carlo, and whom, except for an accident, one does n't see till one comes to Monte Carlo again. One of them Charles found that he had met before. It was n't a memorable meal — although Charles always remembered the evening for one fresh insight into the gambler's possibilities. "Excuse me a moment," said one of Bain's guests. (I should explain that they were dining at the Café de Paris, which is on the Casino square.) In a couple of minutes he was back again. The fish finished, he disappeared afresh. "What 's the matter with Mostyn?" Bain asked his other guest.

"I fancy he's had an inspiration and has run across to the Rooms — gone to back the number of his cloak-room ticket, or something of that kind."

"I wish he'd finish his dinner first anyhow," Bain answered. "It's so jolly jumpy. But we'll ask him?"

Mostyn returned, looking this time a little down in the mouth, Charles thought.

"Have you been in the Rooms in those three minutes?" Bain asked inquisitorially.

Mostyn nodded. "I had a feeling that seventeen was going to turn up and I rushed across to back it."

"And did it?"

"No. Perhaps it would have been the next time, but I did n't want you to miss me."

Bain was peevish: "Oh, we should n't have missed you. You go and play if you want to. Don't mind us — or the cook."

Mostyn was too set on number seventeen to notice Bain's tone. He took what had been said literally, and at the conclusion of the next course was off again.

"He did just the same thing last night," his friend explained. "Since he's been down here I can get him to do nothing else but gamble. He was in the Rooms even before we went to the hotel; he was in the Casino before they opened the next morning. No, I don't know whether he's lost much. I don't think he's won. The way he plays I don't see how he can. He runs from table to table, from roulette to *trente-et-quarante*, shoving gold down here and a note there — forgetting half the time, I should think, what he's staked or where he's staked it. He'll have no nerves left if he goes on this way."

"And no money either," said Bain.

In a minute the truant came back. "Tell the truth now; did you win?" Bain asked.

Mostyn shook his head. "No, I did n't. Zero came up!" Then he turned to his companion: "Do lend me a couple of milles before we go into the Rooms after dinner." His friend gave him the money at once. Money is very easily lent in Monte Carlo. And, curiously enough perhaps, it is generally repaid.

CHAPTER XXVI

IN WHICH THE AMIABLE CHARLES GETS AWAY WITH IT

THE next morning, the morning of Sunday, came. It found Charles a little surfeited with success. He had played overnight and had continued to win. He had n't played very long, but he had played long enough for it to have seemed impossible for him to lose five times running and so to put an end once and for all to his gambling career. When the Rooms closed, Bain's friends — Bain himself had taken care to go to his hotel by the last tram — dragged him off to supper, and it was more in order to get away from the kind of night restaurant scenes with which he had been surfeited in Paris than from any wish to gamble again that he 'd suggested going on to the Sporting Club. There one gambles in rather greater comfort, amid better-dressed people, in a company which is nominally respectable — and one can smoke. They wanted Charles to play baccarat. That he would have liked. It would have been a change from the eternal and infernal roulette. But it would n't have been according to his rule. So he played his progression again and again and again, till at the end his second box was so full that it would hold nothing else. His last stake was a hundred and fifty louis — the maximum. "If that goes down," he said to himself, "I 'll be free. There 'll be no more gambling for Charles Caerleon." But it did n't go down. He had

backed the second column, and number eight turned up. On that one series he was three one thousand franc notes to the good. As a matter of fact, he could n't get them into the box. All the same he ceased playing.

Charles, I should perhaps regret to say, was no Sabbatarian, but nevertheless he did n't go into the Casino. He was sick of it. Besides, Sunday 's a bad day anyhow: all the little people of Nice and Mentone, of Bordighera and Cannes come over, each with fifty francs, and cram the Rooms to the point of suffocation. Two invitations had come his way the previous evening. One to spend the day at a friend's villa at Cap Ferrat he rejected as he lay in bed and watched light clouds dapple the broad sunlight in which the mountains, mist-crowned yesterday, were now bathed. He liked playing bridge, but it seemed rather a sacrilege to spend that exquisite sunshine on a game that would last, with intervals for meals, from the moment of his arrival to that of his departure. To play cards in broad daylight in the open air was an impropriety anyway. The other proposal was more to his liking — to motor over to Ventimiglia and up into the mountains to Tenda, and if the snow allowed, to the Col and through the tunnel. He had done it before — often; but it was an excursion of which one could never tire. To run first along the coast to Italy's first town and then, changing the whole character of the route, to turn inland up the valley and to find oneself going higher and higher, to be in one half-hour in France and in the next in Italy, and to repeat this process again and again, to pass hilltop villages that

threaten to fall with the rocks that support them on to the traveller, to reach Tenda itself and to lunch in the eighteenth century, to drink wine before a crackling wood fire at four or five pennies a bottle — it was all great fun. And after lunch to endanger car and one's own life zigzagging up the pass, where a slip on the ice-covered road would drop one thirty or forty feet into the road below, to go through the long dark hole in the mountain-top — miles it seems — meeting midway, perhaps, a procession of market carts, each with three or four horses, bringing the provisions of the Lombard plain into the rich towns of the Riviera, until suddenly one bursts into the sunshine and deep snowdrifts of the Italian side — it is to be a continent away from Monte Carlo. Return, if you are wise, by Sospello, dropping down into Mentone in the twilight.

Charles and his friends did these things. The day calmed his spirit, it cleansed his mind, he began to see things more clearly, more reasonably. Perhaps he had won half a year's income at his play. It would, it should, all help in America. To have two of his money-boxes full was to have perhaps a large sum. He had kept no count and had no idea of his gains. He was back at his hotel in time to send the key of his third, his last, box to join its fellows in London. It would get there a few hours before he would himself. And, luckily, a little shaking-up and some manipulation with a paper-knife had enabled him to get those last three *billets*, left out from his winnings of the previous night, into the second box. You see he was still afraid that he might, if in the few hours left to him to-morrow he lost his capital, be

tempted to play, in spite of all his determinations, his promises to himself, with any loose, available winnings. But in the mean time his capital was intact. There was no reason why he should n't give *that* a chance to-morrow. His train went at a quarter to five.

When Bowles woke his master the next morning he found him in the highest of spirits at the idea of leaving so soon. Bowles, who was a conservative in the habits of his life, thought it all very odd. Why was his master leaving the South so quickly? Why had he stopped on in Paris? Why was he going to America, to his valet's mind the most God-forsaken of all the God-forsaken places in the world? And, strangest of all, why were his services being dispensed with? Why? Bowles had no clue. But Charles was happy. He sang to himself in his bath; he flung wide open the windows as he dressed that the sun might bathe him in its turn — to the great scandal of an amiable and aged Teuton who was taking an early constitutional. To-morrow, in the morning, he would hear from Alison, would see her handwriting for the first time, and then, reinforced with some hundreds of pounds, he would go West to seek his fortune. He took his luck at the tables as an omen. Unlucky at cards, lucky in love, was not a proverb at which he need flinch. He had n't played, either, at baccarat or at *trente-et-quarante* this time — both games in which cards are used; and no one could say he 'd been other than unlucky at them in past years when he had played. And the other kind of luck was in arrear, too: it should come now.

There were still these last hours to spend in Monte Carlo. The train did n't go till a quarter to five. Charles wished he could start at once. His valet would pack; paying his bill and going to the station would be only a question of a quarter of an hour. He was all impatience to begin his journey; he felt that when he left Monaco he would be on his way to New York. At another time, in another place, he could have read, but at Monte Carlo you can't read. It is like being on board a ship. One has all the time the restlessness that comes of feeling one may be missing something. He went down stairs and out into the sunshine. Hard exercise was what he wanted, but where should he take it unless he went up into the mountains where, not a mile as the crow flies from the Casino, from all this modernity, this luxury, one can walk for hours, meeting no one but perhaps a muleteer with his beast, carrying some indistinguishable produce to the valley below; where if there are houses they seem dead — a barefooted child, clad in smock and petticoat, coming to the door and ready to vanish at once at a word, the only sign of life. But there was no time for the mountains.

Charles walked down to the Condamine and up to the extremity of the Rock. There for an hour he sat on the smaller bastion overlooking the harbour, the bastion that keeps watch over the Italian coast. Monte Carlo was across a half-mile of shimmering water. Everything was still. The smoke from the houses to his left and in Monte Carlo itself rose straight. The only movement he could see was that on the pigeon-shooting ground, whence every few seconds came a little spurt of sound,

and a black figure would run out. Time was when Charles had shot pigeons himself; he had given it up. His mind turned to Alison and to her father. Had he been right in leaving her in Paris? After Mr. Gorham's message it seemed to him he had no choice. If he had remained he could not have seen much of her. And then if he had remained, whatever his excuses were, he would have broken the spirit of his bargain with Mr. Gorham. And that solid gentleman, what was he doing now? It did n't seem credible that in this so-called twentieth century he could really have been kidnapped. Perhaps in this castle here, at Ventimiglia, at Genoa, such things had been done, two, three hundred years ago, but to-day, and in Paris. . . . Still, there it was. And it was equally certain that Mr. Gorham had contemplated it without any special astonishment. He had spoken rather as if he admired his enemy's enterprise. Charles supposed that in a week or two he'd be liberated, would find that he'd lost his fortune, and would then in the most matter-of-fact way proceed to make another. But how even in America do you make bricks without straw? And that reminded him that in New York, thanks to the good fortune of the last few days, he himself was not to be without resources, without weapons. What he had won, whatever it was, should be dedicated as the foundation stone of the success he had to make. It should be the knife with which he was to open his oyster. To make a fortune does not seem so very difficult until you have tried. Charles had never tried.

He would walk back now and see whether he had enough appetite for lunch, his last meal in the South.

The meal, a cigar, coffee, with a stroll on the terrace, took Charles to three o'clock. He went into the Paris, paid his bill, satisfied the servants, told Bowles he would meet him at the train, and entered the Rooms. He still had his capital of three hundred louis intact save for what he had just disbursed — and that was balanced by the little reserve that he had made at the hour of his arrival. He looked about for Bain, and found him playing *trente-et-quarante* with a small capital and a nervous manner. He did n't look as if Monte Carlo was agreeing with him. In a few minutes, seeing Charles, he jumped up and came over to talk to him. "I've a good mind to come back with you," he said. "I can't stand that place at Cap Martin. It's so far off that once one's here one's got to stay here. It means playing all the time. And I never see the men I'm with: they're out all day and all night"—and he proceeded to compound for sins he was inclined to by damning those he had no mind to. "However, I'm moving into Monte Carlo to-morrow. I need n't be in the Rooms all the time then. I know a lot of people and I can always get a game of bridge."

Charles smiled.

"But come along," Bain went on. "If you're just going you'll want a last gamble. I'll watch you. But perhaps you're cleaned out?"

More, perhaps, to show that he still had something left than for any other purposes, Charles began to play. He staked again on the numbers of Alison's name. The loss of his initial ten louis on the first dozen rattled his companion. He was even more rattled when it was followed by twenty. "I hope you've got a return

ticket," he said, as Charles handed his stake — forty louis this time — to the croupier. That, too, was lost.

"This is too exciting; it's bad for me," and Bain walked away, to watch Charles from a seat on a couch against the wall. He could n't tell from that distance how much was being lost — "or won," Charles said to himself as he dropped a couple of *milles* into his third, the empty money-box. He left the table and walked over to Bain.

'Cleaned out?"

Charles reassured him. "As a matter of sober fact, I've won exactly ninety louis there."

"Capital! You'd better lend it me."

"Of course. Here you are — a couple of thousand francs."

Bain shook his head. "No, thanks; I did n't mean it; I was joking. I won't start borrowing in the Rooms. It's the devil. Besides, I swore I would n't lose more than a hundred pounds this visit — and I won't. Luckily I've still got some of it left."

"All right; as you like. But I always want people to borrow of me in the Rooms if I'm in luck. I look upon it as money saved against the time when the luck changes. Not much harm happens even if I never get it back. I'd have lost it anyhow, as likely as not. And I can't remember any time when I was n't repaid — sometimes, I confess, when I'd forgotten all about it — weeks after. Often it comes in jolly handy."

They strolled again to a table. It was getting late. Four o'clock was passed. Charles started to play: he had a feeling that he'd better get rid of his capital.

He felt that it would be lucky to do so. Ridiculous, of course, — but gamblers have these superstitions. Still, he proceeded according to his programme. Ten, twenty, forty, and so on. Now he would stake on a dozen, then on a column. His luck continued. Again and again he would reach his third or fourth stake, and would then win. The box was getting heavy and almost too full to receive any more. Charles looked at his watch.

"Ought n't you to go," Bain asked.

"I'll run through a series once more," Charles answered. "I've got lots of time — five minutes. All my things are at the station."

Just because he was in a hurry the croupier seemed to spin with unusual slowness. Old ladies delayed the game by their wrangling.

Ten louis on the first dozen went.

Ten louis on the second dozen followed it.

The forty louis was no more successful.

"Oh, come away!" Bain said. "What's the good? You'll lose all you've won. Besides, you'll miss your train."

Charles, however, was bent on his programme. Eighty louis went on the third dozen. Number eleven appeared.

And then three mille notes. Bain had n't yet seen Charles stake so heavily. A young German couple who had been watching his play gasped. The notes went on the third dozen.

"*Tout va aux billets*," the croupiers announced.

Suddenly Charles noticed that he'd made a mistake. His note should have been on the second, not the third,

dozen. "*Rien ne va plus.*" He stretched over, and quickly changed them. You're allowed to if the ball is still moving.

"*Vingt-neuf noir impair et passe.*"

Charles's alteration had cost him three hundred and sixty pounds. But he did n't care. He'd managed to lose his capital. And, anyhow, the change from the third to the second dozen was according to his programme, and it was on that programme that he had won whatever he had won. After all, too, he fancied he'd made a good deal since lunch.

But Bain and the young German couple were both distressed.

There was barely time for the train. At the station Bowles was anxiously undecided as to whether he should n't take his master's things out of the compartment. Perhaps he'd changed his mind again!

"Good-bye. *Bon voyage.* Do come and see my pictures at the end of the month, when I'll be back."

Charles had n't told Bain he was off to America.

And now, truly, farewell, irresponsibility!

CHAPTER XXVII

IN WHICH THE AMIABLE CHARLES IS CARRIED TOWARDS LONDON

CHARLES leant back in his seat. He had a sickness of the spirit. A little sense of foreboding. Why, he could n't say. Perhaps it was that the sun was setting. Nowhere more than on the Riviera does the sinking sun suggest the end of things, the finish of happiness. A chill falls on the heart when darkness threatens. If the hour had not been so ridiculously early he'd have called for his bed to be made up. But that was impossible at five o'clock. Nor would he sleep. The train stopped at Monaco, at Cap d'Ail. It ran past Eze. . . . Nice was passed and then Cannes. Agay and St. Raphael and Fréjus: all these he was seeing for the last time — or not seeing, for it was dark. He would n't, he thought, be again on this happy sea. There was no one on the train to whom he could talk. Bowles was n't society. He wished he'd never come South. And then he remembered his three full money boxes, here in the suit-case at his side. They were compensation.

Came the first call for dinner. Charles dined, and, dining, drank with the definite intention of sending himself to sleep. No coffee, but a liqueur. It seemed such a cold world. The clouds had come up in the last couple of hours, and rain was spitting against the window.

What was Alison doing? Had she written to him? There would be time, just time, to search for her letter. Perhaps there'd be an excuse for his spending the day in Paris — only the day, since to stay longer would mean the missing of his boat for New York. But why not miss it? Why go? Europe was his home. Would n't Mr. Gorham alter his view as to the value of fifteen hundred a year when, shorn of his capital, he rejoined his daughter and freedom? Charles knew he would n't.

That was the worst of it. Mr. Gorham had Charles by the leg. He just had to go. Unless something had happened. But Charles could n't hope for that.

The next morning Charles told Bowles to come and sit in the compartment and to watch over his baggage while he himself drove across Paris to the Chatham. He'd rejoin the train at the Gare du Nord. You may be sure he carried in his own hand the small bag that contained the three heavy boxes.

"No, Mr. Caerleon, there is nothing for you."

Charles was dumbfounded. Surely Alison would have written to him. What should he do? He would go to the Meurice and inquire. Perhaps — but, no, he would n't think. "Hotel Meurice," he told the chauffeur.

But even as the taxi slid from the door one ran out. "Stop! stop!"

The car waited.

A frock-coated clerk came from the office. "Mr. Caerleon, a telephone message came for you just now. I was just sending it to the porter. Here it is. I wrote

it down: 'Tell Mr. Caerleon that Miss Gorham will see him at the Gare du Nord.'"

Charles's heart bounded. "Quick — not to the Meurice, but to the Gare du Nord! *Vite! Vite!*" But minutes had been lost.

What could Alison's message mean? Was she by any chance going to London? It was unlikely, impossible. But he was to see her, to speak to her. Perhaps she would let him send Bowles on with the baggage. He himself could follow at midday, or even in the afternoon. At the worst, if only the taxi would hurry now, he'd have several minutes with her.

Charles found himself at the Gare du Nord with ten minutes to spare — and there, with Mrs. Phillips, was Alison. She looked a little worn by her anxieties, Charles thought, and he could not help a feeling that her manner was less cordial than he had thought it. So Alison intended he should feel. She had not forgotten, and would not forgive, what she had seen at the Gare de Lyon. It was one of those misunderstandings that a word would clear up — but the word could n't be said. She smiled at Charles, and gave him her hand.

"Mr. Caerleon, I came to the station instead of writing to you, because I am always nervous about the French posts — and if my letter had been delayed it would n't have caught you before you sailed, perhaps. I had n't anything of importance to say myself, but when I opened Papa's blotter yesterday — he was writing at it just before he went out that day — I found a letter that's evidently for you. I think he must have written it just before he went to Cook's. He did n't even have

time to address an envelope. That's why I saw it — there were only a few lines. Read it now."

Charles did n't want to read anything in these few minutes during which he could speak to and look at Alison, but he glanced at the note. He saw it was the letter of introduction Mr. Gorham had promised him, and he realised in the moment of looking at it that he had justified by his careless folly every word of implied doubt that Mr. Gorham had uttered at his expense. It was with the aid of Mr. Gorham's introduction that he was to make good in America — and he had even forgotten that he had never received it. But he turned to Alison: —

"Yes, Miss Gorham, — your father promised me that. I am very grateful to him — and to you. But I have another favour to ask — we have so little time. May I not let my things go on by this train and stop and give you and Mrs. Phillips lunch? We can talk then, and I can learn your news — if you will tell it me."

An Alison not too proud, not wounded, would happily have answered, "Yes"; but before her mind sprang up again the memory of a blue turban and brown eyes.

"Thank you, Mr. Caerleon, but we can't lunch. We're engaged, are n't we, Constance?" Mrs. Phillips did n't like it, did n't understand, but she nodded assent. "And, to tell the truth, I have n't any news. Papa has n't written again. We've just got to wait — and I'm having quite a good time. Is n't that so, Constance? I hope you had a good time at Monte Carlo, Mr. Caerleon, and I hope you'll have a pleasant voyage and like America. You ought to get in. The train'll be starting.

I thank you again, both on Papa's behalf and my own, for all you did for us. Yes, I will certainly — or Papa will — let you know what happens. You will cable your address, you say? But that does n't seem worth while. Good-bye."

The train had started.

Charles watched as long as he could Alison's gracious figure. Was it only a fancy that her voice and hand trembled a little at those last words, that last handshake?

BOOK II

CRESCENT FORTUNE

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH THE AMIABLE CHARLES OPENS HIS THREE BOXES

CHARLES had often returned to London from the South, from Newmarket, from Paris, in the devil of a hole financially. He had never returned with the kind of worries that preoccupied him now. At least, to-day, he had n't to fret about money. He patted the bag at his side and wondered how much he 'd brought back. A great deal more than the sum he 'd taken with him. That, at least, was certain. But still he had n't an easy mind. Know that you can't pay what you owe at the moment you should pay it, and you are sure that no anxiety, no sorrow can equal your unhappiness. And toothache: that has much the same effect. Or you are in love. . . . Perhaps that is the worst of all. Not actually to know. So Charles felt.

"Charing Cross."

Charles looked at the familiar, grey, smoky station. He wished he 'd asked someone to meet him — someone, anyone, to take his mind off his own affairs. Leaving Bowles to look after his baggage, he went off incontinently to his club for his letters. Thank Heaven! all three of the letters from Monte Carlo were waiting his arrival.

He looked round his flat. If you must live in London, Mount Street is n't a bad pitch. But somehow to-night he did n't care for it. That Conder fan, that early Orpen,

that Anquetin — they were all charming, but they left him cold. And, anyhow, he was going away. He wished he'd gone to a hotel rather than come here. Bowles could have fetched the other things that he'd want in America. Frank with himself, he knew that it was that he cared too much for his home to leave it happily, too much for his habits to relinquish them easily. He had been used to Bowles calling him in the morning. Tomorrow would be the last time that that would happen.

No, he would n't dine at home. He'd go out. Anywhere to escape his own thoughts, to get away from fancies about the future. Should he open his three boxes and see how much he'd made? No, not now. When he came home after dinner — when he could count it all out undisturbed. Locking them up in his desk he turned to dress, and almost before Bowles had arrived he was ready to go out. No, not to his club. Men would be there who'd want an explanation of his untimely return. At the Carlton grill he'd have both food and peace.

In these troubled hours Charles put everything off. He had no assurance. Dinner finished, he avoided going home. He sat for a couple of hours in the Empire, and then for another hour in King Street eating oysters and pondering the future. A miserable business!

Charles did n't know which box he opened first — he did n't know whether it was the first he'd filled, the second, or the last. He threw back the lid and emptied its golden contents onto his bed. But they were comparatively few. What would count were the *billets*, and they did n't fall out so readily. Moreover, they were folded up in all sorts of ways. He could n't tell whether

they were five hundred francs or a thousand until he'd unfolded them. Sometimes two were folded together. Some which were at the very bottom had to be dislodged with a button-hook. At last, however, they were all carefully arranged. So many piles of gold which would persist in falling about on the coverlet, but each of which was ten louis high; so many notes each for five hundred francs, so many of a thousand. The contents of the box were worth nine hundred and eighteen pounds. Charles had experience, he'd been used to winning and losing large sums, but this result made him gasp. Which box was it he'd opened? If it were the last, then the others would yield more. And surely it was the last: it was not so very full. The truth was he had n't had the slightest idea of what he'd won. He'd not even attempted to keep any record. Most of the time he'd been thinking of something else. Money had gone on to the table, and beyond seeing it go or taking off his stake and his winnings he had paid no real attention. Perhaps it was as well. He might have been tempted to play differently if he had known how much he was making.

The same process was repeated with the second box. Its yield — Charles gasped again — was more than twice as generous. Its contents were far more closely packed. It was the one that he had taken so much trouble to manipulate. Roughly, it worked out at two thousand three hundred pounds.

And the third. It need n't contain as much as the second to make his total winnings five thousand pounds. The gold was taken out first and reckoned: the total was now three thousand three hundred and twenty-two

pounds. Charles was becoming excited. He unfolded each note separately and added its value to the total. Gradually it increased, twenty and forty pounds at a time. And yet the box seemed full of folded papers. But by the time five thousand was reached only three or four were left. Whether five thousand pounds in absolute winnings was actually reached would depend on their denomination. Charles was becoming greedy now: he wanted the five thousand to be exceeded not only by the two hundred with which he'd started his play, but by the sixty he'd given away so lightly in the Abbaye, and also by the amount he'd spent in Paris. The total was now five thousand three hundred and fifty-two: his anxiety would be answered by the amount in this last fold. It proved to be two notes, one for a thousand, the other for five hundred francs. The five thousand had been passed — by twelve pounds. And he had even had the foresight to allow for the exchange.

Charles thought to himself that bed would be a good place now. But first he must write to Alison, that she might get his letter in the evening of to-morrow — to-day, by now. There was nothing he could say to her, save to repeat that he begged for her news when she could send any, that he should cable his address to thank her. A poor letter — yet to Alison when it came it brought more happiness than she would confess to herself. She kept it. Mrs. Phillips was not even told of its arrival.

And then the money had to be put together. The gold was tied in a handkerchief; the notes were arranged carefully: they made a tidy heap! Two other letters

should be written. With five thousand pounds now in his hands Charles was beginning to feel himself a business man. The letters were identical in their terms. They said that Mr. Charles Caerleon had in French gold and paper (he even gave the proportions: someone had told him that the paper was worth more than the gold) the sum of one hundred and forty-two thousand five hundred and twenty francs, and he invited an offer for it. One letter went to Messrs. Thomas Cook and Son, the other to the Credit Lyonnais. They asked for telephone answers before half-past nine. You see he had to keep his appointment with Mr. Pyeman at quarter-past ten — and then immediately afterwards to go to Euston.

Leaving a note that he was to be called at seven, he went to bed, and at once to sleep.

CHAPTER II

MR. PYEMAN — WHO ADVANCES NOTHING

THERE are solicitors — and solicitors. Unhappily, the first class is far less numerous than the second, and unhappily again, Mr. Pyeman, in spite of his "old family" connection, was of the second. That is not to say that he was dishonest. He was n't. To stray from the path of the strictest legal rectitude would be with so good a business dishonest, indeed; worse, it would be stupid. Mr. Pyeman's firm always let you have the residue of the estate. You got something. And you may be sure that he kept his clients' money in a separate account. Mr. Pyeman was wanting in no outward, visible, tangible sign of legal responsibility.

He even kept Charles waiting the regulation ten minutes. Charles thought he could hear his voice through the wooden partition droning away in an unnecessary dictation — "to attending you on the telephone and suggesting the advisability of an early interview," and so on. But it was n't Mr. Pyeman: it was a clerk. Mr. Pyeman was in an inner chamber, from which, as Charles entered, issued the junior partner, a little ferret.

"Well, Mr. Caerleon, it is unusual surely to see you in London at this time of the year. I thought you were in Monte Carlo always till the spring. You young men

have a good time — we poor lawyers have to stop at home and do the work." And Mr. Pyeman sank back, folded his hands on his severely fanciful black-and-white waistcoat, and surveyed Charles with a steely eye, as who should say: "He wants money, but he's come to the wrong shop. He don't deserve it, and he shan't have it."

Generally, I confess, when Charles had to interview Mr. Pyeman he felt at a disadvantage. It was like interviewing a bank manager. He usually had something to ask, and Mr. Pyeman succeeded always — even against Charles's better judgment — in making him feel that it was a favour that was being conferred. Everything was "rather irregular, you know, Mr. Caerleon. We'll do it, but it's irregular." This time, however, Charles had plenty of courage. There, against his heart, were five Bank of England notes each for a thousand pounds. Indeed, they gave him so much courage that he was unable to resist the temptation — having so much time on his hands! — to take a rise out of Mr. Pyeman's pomposity.

"I came home earlier than usual, Mr. Pyeman. The truth is, I want to go to America at once, and I came to ask you if you could help me —" Charles paused with malice. He thought Mr. Pyeman would jump in, and he was right.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Caerleon. I told you I could n't advise the trustees" — a mere form that; the actual trustees were too incapable of business to do other than they were told — "I told you I could n't advise the trustees to make you any more advances. Besides, from what funds could they do it? I think, if I may say so,

they've been patient, Mr. Caerleon, perhaps too patient. Later on you may regret it." Charles made as if to speak. "No, Mr. Caerleon, I'm afraid it's no use. A young man in your position should either work for more money or he should live reasonably on what he has. You have n't any right — and I speak as I am sure your dear father would have wished me to speak — to spend all your time in Paris and Monte Carlo. Why don't you go and live at Ballyhackle?" — a little place of his very own that Charles owned, neglected, if the truth be told, and let when he could, on the west coast of Ireland.

"I don't go and live at Ballyhackle for what I consider a very good reason: I should be bored to death there. I should hate the people; I'm afraid they would n't like me. I should take to drink —"

"Well, no one suggests your living there all the year round. But I've told you again and again that you can't go on as you're doing. You're ruining yourself. Everything you could touch you've spent, and Heaven knows how much you owe! I did n't want to mention it, but there's my own firm's account against you. It's been running on for years. So you can see that it's no use asking my assistance."

Mr. Pyeman looked the part to the life. He had blown off steam, figuratively and actually. He was genially saturnine. Charles, for his part, succeeded in looking crestfallen.

"I can see that, Mr. Pyeman. I won't ask for it. And you do seriously advise me to go and live at Ballyhackle? I don't think it would be very nice at this time of the year. Are n't there always lots of wet mists in

Ireland?" And he looked out on to the soiled green and the soot-laden air of Lincoln's Inn.

"There are a great many things I don't like in London, Mr. Caerleon, but I stop and do my duty all the same."

Charles looked at his watch. Being pompous always takes a long time. "Well, Mr. Pyeman, it happens that I did n't come in to see if I could induce you to get my uncles to advance me any more money. I came in to say that as I was going to America, — this very day, by the way, — I wanted to know what the amount of your account against me was and to ask you to help me by telling me as nearly as you can how much I can really count on a year after deducting all the interests and charges I've got to pay — through my own idiocies, I'll allow, if you like."

To say that Mr. Pyeman was astonished was to put it mildly. However, he was n't going to turn good money away.

"You must hurry, if you please," Charles put in.

"Bring me Mr. Charles Caerleon's account at once," Mr. Pyeman told a clerk who came at his call. "It's made out, for I had it prepared when Mr. Caerleon wrote a couple of days ago."

"That was kind of you," Charles said. He did n't blame Mr. Pyeman for taking him at his word — but all the same, he wished that he had n't given way to temptation and embroidered what he'd got to ask with this flourish about the account. Perhaps, though, as Mr. Pyeman was evidently going to ask to be paid, it was all to the good that he'd forestalled him.

"And what does it come to?" he asked.

"Ninety-seven pounds and nineteen shillings — say ninety-five pounds," said Mr. Pyeman.

"No, we'll say ninety-seven pounds and nineteen shillings exactly, if you don't mind, Mr. Pyeman. And if you'll throw in this interview and write across the bottom the words, 'up to and including to-day's interview,' and if you'll add the date, I'll pay you here and now in cash. You can no doubt give me change for this note. And please tell me — I can only stop a very few minutes — about my income, my future income."

Mr. Pyeman was too astonished at what had just happened to be as calm and as coherent as usual; he started off on explanations. He had also, it appeared, in expectation of being asked for more money, prepared a schedule showing where Charles stood. Charles stopped the explanations.

"I want it in the least possible number of words and in the simplest way, please. That's all I've room for. I can take away what you've written there and digest it on the boat."

Mr. Pyeman's information amounted to the statement that between now and the end of the year Charles would have paid into his bank exactly three hundred pounds. On the first of January next a new year would begin, and with it, if he did n't further embarrass himself, he'd enter into a minimum of a steady twelve hundred a year. It could n't be much more.

"Three hundred pounds is n't a good deal to set up house with," said Charles to himself as he drove to Euston. "And twelve hundred is n't much of an income. Still, it 's better than nothing. And if I don't

lose this five thousand here, that'll add about two hundred a year more. We ought to be able to live."

Bowles, the richer for several discarded suits of clothes, a handsome certificate of character, and a ten-pound note, alone saw Charles off. "I wonder what game he's up to," he muttered, as he turned on his heel and walked out of the station.

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH THE MAURETANIA IS NOT DESCRIBED

ON board ship Charles was thought an odd fish. His little title had secured him some consideration. Of course he had a room to himself. Next to his deck-chair sat an old apple-faced Bostonian. I won't tell you his name — but Charles is by way of saying prayers for him every night. It was this white-haired, cheerful gentleman who first taught him the real meaning of American hospitality. Mr. Gorham had been hospitable, but in a different sense. His was the hospitality of exuberant good-fellowship. That sort does n't always ring true. We have too much of it in England. But the hospitality that Charles now for the first time experienced was of a kind that America alone knows how to grow. I'll tell you. Charles was a young man. A day or two out he complained to his neighbour, in answer to some polite inquiry, that his room was so far forward that he got all the pitching and tossing there was, and that he dressed squeamishly in consequence. His neighbour was old — white-haired, as I've said; perhaps seventy-five. "Now, that's too bad," he answered. "But I'll tell you what we'll do: we'll change rooms. I've got one on your deck but more amidships — an outside one, too, like yours. You see nothing upsets me. I shall be perfectly comfortable. The steward can soon alter our things."

Of course Charles would n't have it — but he looked at the old man and thanked him, and wondered whether there were many more at home like him. Later he learned there were; he learned that there is, and can be, no trouble too great for a good American to take for the stranger with whom he's become acquainted and whom he likes.

But to return to Charles being thought an odd fish. He had so much to think of, and he felt generally so strange, that he made practically no acquaintances on board. He walked by himself, and when he was in his cabin he was either asleep or he was reading "Evan Harrington." Everyone else was reading "Jenny Gerhardt," or Anthony Hope's last book. He hardly went into the smoke-room. Its atmosphere repelled him. Besides, no society that was n't largely feminine could hold Charles's attention for more than a few minutes. However, one night after dinner, when it was too cold to sit on deck and all the seats in the lounge seemed engaged, he did go into the smoke-room and watched the auction pool. I suppose the gambler's instinct was aroused in him — or perhaps he was both amused and piqued by the knowledge that to the men around him his arrival was something to be surprised at, and that they were at least sure that he would n't take a hand. The facetiousness of the auctioneer bored him stiff, but suddenly he heard himself bidding for the high field. Everyone in the room turned round to look. "God bless my soul!" they seemed to say. Having started, he went on. Someone else wanted it — badly! But then so did Charles — although he was n't sure what it was.

Encouraged by the plaudits of the crowd his adversary went on: Charles did n't secure the prize till he'd reached twenty-three pounds. Much applause. Rising, he slipped away. He did n't like his surroundings. He went to his stateroom. It was late and he went to bed. Half an hour later he was asleep. Came a knock at his door. Someone had been sent from the smoke-room to collect the twenty-three pounds. You see, they thought Charles must be drunk; they 'd discussed his sudden outbreak, and feared that if they did n't get the money now he 'd honestly disclaim any knowledge of the whole thing when morning came.

And when morning did come and Charles, who had been lazy and had stopped in bed till after midday, making his first appearance at the luncheon bugle, went on deck, he found himself the hero of the ship. The high field had won — the biggest pool of the passage. "That does n't seem to me to call for much intelligence," Charles said to himself. "Any fool could tell we'd have a good run in weather like this." He was a young traveller.

Anyway, though, he'd paid his passage — his passage out. Whatever happened he must keep enough to pay it back. But that did n't trouble him. This new evidence of his good luck confirmed him in the belief that for the moment, at least, he was not to be beaten. Supposing, though, that the luck had been the other way! It was n't a pleasant thought. Still, he did n't dismiss it. Instead of having five thousand pounds in his pocket, instead of having paid all his expenses in the South and

in Paris, instead of having paid Mr. Pyeman's outrageous bill, he'd now be as uncomfortable as his temperament would allow. Surely he'd be worrying. He'd be watching jealously the growth of his wine bill. And then he fell to thinking of what his luck at Monte Carlo really meant. It was simple enough. He'd risked two hundred pounds and he'd won five thousand. He'd pulled off a chance the odds against which were twenty-five to one. Such things are done. But not often. The pitcher had gone often enough to the well. At each journey the odds in Charles's favour were five to two — but there were so many journeys. And there was zero. "If anyone ever heard of my luck," Charles said to himself, "I'd have to spend an hour or so explaining to him that such things happen once in a blue moon. That it's pure chance. I might so easily have been down and out five minutes after I first went in." In fact, he had often played the same game before — with exactly that speedy and unhappy result.

And in spite of his five thousand pounds Charles came soberly to the conclusion that gambling is a mug's game.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH THE AMAZEMENT OF THE AMIABLE CHARLES AT A NEW YORK HOTEL IS NOT MADE ENOUGH OF

CHARLES found himself wondering a couple of mornings later why so much nonsense is talked about the discomforts of the New York customs examinations. Of course it is n't very agreeable. How could it be? But it's about as agreeable as it can be made in this dishonest world. Mr. Loeb and his assistants know their business. The assistants are n't deferential; amenity is n't their long suit — but then, America is a democratic country, and their patience is sorely and continually tried. If an Englishman is a fairly good mixer he'll get through all right — both on the wharf, and later.

And anyhow, no Englishman ought to complain. When he reaches the wharf his soul ought still to be full of that wonderful passage up the Bay. No, not the Statue of Liberty, which is rotten, but all that wonderful forest of tall buildings, challenging the sky. New York, he learns for the first time, has a beauty equal to that of Rome, of Venice, of Paris, — a beauty that is actual, the greater since it is living, vital, of to-day.

The worst I can say of Charles is that he was chilled. He encountered no difficulties, but he missed all sorts of things — intangible many of them, things of atmo-

sphere — to which he was used. Nobody said "Sir." And people looked at his eyeglass.

His old Bostonian friend had advised him to stop at the Knickerbocker Hotel. Driving there, some — not much, but some — of his good opinion of New York's beauty was chipped off. An American who goes through the mean streets near Waterloo or Paddington gets the same feeling. Luckily, though, in England there are n't so many of them between the station and the traveller's haven. And what there are are n't so fierce. An Englishman may be forgiven for being a little chilled, a little frightened. It is all very hard.

And this was Alison's country — almost Alison's home. Charles was n't so lazy but that he'd looked up the distance between New York and Philadelphia. He knew that the ladies of Philadelphia would come into New York for a luncheon, a day's shopping, a matinée. This savage town was the cradle of Alison's grace. It hardly seemed possible. So he thought as his taxi-cab jolted and twisted in and out from the Cunard wharf to Forty-second Street. I wish, indeed, that I had the space to tell you all that he thought now and hereafter of America. If there is one thing that if to-morrow I became a daily newspaper proprietor I should at once do, it is to have always — not now and then, but always — a man going to America for the first time — if my paper were English: a man going to Europe for the first time — if my paper were American. Every star reporter I had should go through that mill. Things change, and people's points of view change, and, anyhow, there's always so much to write about. Fancy what a New

Yorker must think when he finds himself in an English hotel in Liverpool, or Southampton, or Plymouth. Fancy! I don't think any American has ever been so impolite as to say.

But Charles. His taxi swung round the corner and deposited him at the Knickerbocker portal. He learned afterwards that there was n't any reason for his being amazed. The splendour of the place was n't peculiar. There were a dozen such gorgeous hostelries within half an hour's walk. It was n't so much the splendour that impressed him as the taste. . . .

It was nine o'clock: he'd had no proper breakfast, so that after being shown to his room by a sleek boy with an Irish accent (who confessed later on to having been in the country only six weeks, but who already seemed to own it, so rapidly does New York assimilate its immigrants) Charles started to look for the coffee-room! Coffee-room! Such things don't exist in these marble palaces! But, in the first place, he had to get downstairs. He found he was on the eleventh storey. He thought he'd use the stairs for the sake of geographical education. But the stairs were n't so easy to find. The one unavoidable thing was a young lady in the neatest of what he learned afterwards to describe as shirtwaists, who sat at a desk, obviously registered his appearance in her mind, and said "Good morning" as if she'd decided to take him under her special protection, and at the same time thought he was rather a joke. She was the "floor clerk," and she did n't approve of his using the stairs anyway, and told him to ring for the "elevator." He did. It slid rapidly into view and Charles

descended in the care of yet another youth, who expatiated pleasantly on the beauty of the climate and the fact that Charles was obviously English. He, too, seemed to think it a joke. One of Charles's great American preoccupations, by the way, was exactly what to do with this army of boys. Were you to give them a quarter every time you looked at or spoke to one of them, or did you save the quarters up for one supreme largesse when you went away? And some of them looked too grand either for quarters or for grubby dollar notes. There is a certain "Captain" of boys, a young man with immaculately brushed yellow hair, the very memory of whom frightens Charles to this day. He had so much dignity, and he was so polite. How much ought one to give *him?* Charles found it was of no use to ask Americans. They did n't seem to know anything about it. Some of them are under the fond delusion that no one either expects or would take a tip in America.

At length Charles was in the café. "Tea, please," he said, but that proved to be an insufficient instruction. Would he have China Tea, or English Breakfast Tea, or tea of this kind or of that? There seemed to be a dozen varieties. The choice added a new burden to the day. And then the embarrassment of breakfast foods — of cereals, of fruits, of sausages, of chops, of eggs, of steaks. Never in his life had the Amiable Charles felt so small, so insignificant, so much an unimportant cog in a very great wheel.

Charles got out alive at half-past ten. It was a Tuesday. He would spend the day trying to get some sort of a line on New York. He would n't deliver his letter

of introduction till the next day. In the mean time he'd walk about, and with the aid of a map and a guide-book would see everything there was to see.

"You'd better take an umbrella," one of the hundred elevator boys told him.

CHAPTER V

DEAD MUSEUMS AND MILES OF MISERY

THE umbrella was quite unnecessary. Never in his life had Charles tasted such an air, bathed in such happy and vigorous sun. The atmosphere was that of the Alps when snow is first on the mountains and the sun shines out of a cloudless sky. And against that sky buildings stood — sometimes frankly ugly, sometimes beautiful as St. Mark's, but always fit for their purpose. He walked on Fifth Avenue and was astonished, and on Broadway and was amazed, and in the farther, the mean, streets, and was appalled. City of contrasts, indeed!

After a time he was hungry and went into a restaurant whose name seemed to him familiar. He'd read of it in some American novel. The waiters were Irish and did n't enjoy waiting. They certainly did n't like being spoken to as if they were expected to take an order and to carry it out. Charles asked for the wine-card. Looking at it, he demanded a half-bottle of Graves.

"What's that?" he was asked.

"Graves," he replied.

"There ain't no such wine," the waiter asserted, after an anxious scrutiny of the list.

"G—r—a—v—e—s—graves," Charles repeated.

"Oh, graves, is what you mean?" and the waiter

looked at Charles as if his customer was a little dippy. Himself he pronounced it in a mortuary fashion.

One hears a great deal in England of the glories of the American museums, of their picture-collections, public and private. Charles determined to go and see the Metropolitan Museum at once. Perhaps he'd be so busy after to-day that he'd never have another chance. I hardly like to tell you that this visit was almost the only real disappointment he had in America. Other things he might n't have liked; certain characteristics of the country rubbed his fur the wrong way — but they did n't disappoint him. But the Metropoltan Museum frankly did. I'm not sure, though, that it was n't his own fault. Perhaps I told you he was a Manet fanatic. The New York Manets did n't seem to him important enough. They did n't hold a candle to those of the Geheimrat Arnold in Berlin. Perhaps he was wrong. So much depends on the mood. The novelty, the beauty of the city had worn out his powers, and while he had been in the gallery the weather had changed; that elevator-boy had prophesied more wisely than had seemed. It was cold; that a sun should be behind those grey-brown clouds seemed impossible; the wind bit his face and fingers. He took a taxi and drove to his hotel through streets that seemed to him grey, sombre, hideous. "Gee whizz," he said to himself, — it was a phrase he'd picked up on the boat, — "they do know how to charge," as he paid the driver. The hotel porter smiled sardonically.

Charles went to his room. The enthusiasm of the morning had given way to the blankest depression, to

the most hopeless pessimism. He was quite, quite sure he'd never be happy in the country. How could he be? There was n't even a fireplace in his room. He sat on the edge of his bed and looked at the telephone and swore softly. He'd have liked to cry. He was homesick. Whom did he know? No one. What had he come for? What, indeed? Because he was in love — in love with an American girl who had the sense apparently to prefer Europe. He was to make a fortune. Was he? How could he even make a living among all these strangers? He'd a good mind to give up the whole thing, to return to Paris and to Alison, to await Mr. Gorham's release, and to throw himself on his mercy. What possible place for himself could he make in this inhuman Babylon — this city in which even the elevator-boys thought he was a joke. However, he could n't discard his eyeglass. He'd sworn he would n't. He looked at his boots. Should he go out and get a pair with the proper nobbly toes? Perhaps they'd do the trick.

He'd go to bed, he thought. He'd be comfortable in bed. The room would n't be stuffy anyhow; it was a good thing there was n't a fire after all. It was rather jolly and warm as a matter of fact. And perhaps he would n't stop in bed. He looked out over the roofs below him: it was getting dark; lights were beginning to pick out the shapes of the buildings and the lie of the streets. He went into his dinky little bath-room and lay in a hot bath. It really was n't so bad. And it was so easy to telephone to the floor clerk to ask to be called at half-past six. Then he'd have time to dress for dinner. He'd got an idea for dinner.

CHAPTER VI

IN WHICH THE AMIABLE CHARLES TAKES HIS FIRST AMERICAN COCKTAIL, AND A PERSON OF THE STORY REAPPEARS

CHARLES'S idea for dinner was not culinary. I don't want you to think he was greedy. Indeed he was n't. No, the truth was that as he had to eat he liked to eat well. That does n't mean that he ate much; it does n't even mean that he thought a great deal about it. He thought enough.

His idea was based simply on his wish, a little less insistent now that he had slept, to get out of America. New York frightened him. He felt that here for the first time in his life he was n't his own master, was n't even captain of his soul. He felt small. He did n't cut enough ice. But, however small he might feel, he could n't stop in his bedroom indefinitely. He dressed and sailed downstairs, a little disturbed that it was a new shirtwaist that watched his sinking into the elevator shaft, watched him with a cold and appraising scrutiny. Perhaps there was something not quite right with his clothes. Shot out on the ground floor, he was dazzled at the movement and the light. Suddenly he found a friend — a *maître d'hôtel* who 'd been at Ostend. Charles, who felt so lonely, was even more glad to see Jacques than Jacques was glad to see him.

"You are stopping here, Mr. Caerleon?"

"Yes, I am, Jacques, and I feel as if I wanted to cry to-night and to go away to-morrow."

"Oh, that's all right, sir. Don't you let that worry you any. Newcomers are generally that way. It'll wear off. Come in and have dinner, and I'll see that you forget you're in America. You shall even have sole."

"I can't, Jacques. I'm dining somewhere else — but I wish you could tell me what'll cheer me up."

"Go into the bar, Mr. Caerleon" — the earlier "sir" was a mistake, a reversion to European habit — "and have a cocktail —"

"A cocktail! Never. They're an abomination."

"In Europe, yes. I agree. But not here. An American bartender who goes to Europe loses his hand — or, yes, perhaps it's his conscience he loses. He makes bad drinks anyway. The same thing happens when a good restaurant man comes over here. He may be good enough to start with, but the edge gets taken off him pretty soon. How can he help it, poor man, when he's as likely as not to have a customer to attend to whose only idea of ordering a dinner is to ask for the most expensive things. I can tell you it does me good to see someone who really knows."

"Jacques, you're pulling my leg. But what about that cocktail? You get the real thing here, you say? What am I to ask for?"

"You go right round there, Mr. Caerleon, and you'll find the bar. Ask for a Clover Club. And now, good evening, sir. I shall hope to order lunch or dinner for you to-morrow."

Charles was obedient. He found the bar, was aston-

ished at its size, its pictures, which would have been equally in place in the Luxembourg, and its crowd. With internal diffidence he asked the white-jacketed bartender for a Clover Club. He saw it mixed and shaken up. He drank it, and thought it a little sweet, a little ladylike. He leaned against the bar in what seemed the regulation attitude and considered the cocktail's flavour. . . . Suddenly he was touched on the shoulder.

"Excuse me, sir, but are you an Englishman? My friends there and I had a little bet about it. I said you were; they said you were n't."

It was clearly an Englishman who was addressing Charles. Rather a pleasant-looking young man — a little dissipated, but pleasant.

"Oh, yes, I'm English all right — always was and always shall be," Charles replied.

"So much the better. Won't you join us? What'll you take?"

Charles did n't like drinking with strangers. He excused himself. He said he'd only just come off the boat and was n't in shape yet.

"Well, I'm sorry. But perhaps you can help me. Have you got an English Army List in your baggage? If you have, may I come and look at it? You're in the army surely."

Charles remembered what he had heard of confidence men, and although his bank-notes were secure in the hotel safe, he thought the conversation had gone far enough.

"No, I have not got an Army List, and I am not in the army — and I wish you good evening."

He walked out into Broadway. The cocktail or the encounter or the passage of time or an improvement in the weather — one of these or all four had brought back his equanimity. He looked at the silhouette of the "Times" building against the azure sky, and wondered why people said that New York had no beauty, why they did n't say no other city was more beautiful. Just now Washington Square was the place he had to go to. He 'd looked it up in his Baedeker, and he learned that unless he wanted to ruin himself in taxi-cabs he 'd better take a car — a tram-car we 'd call it in England — and get out at Madison Square and walk down Fifth Avenue a few blocks. Even a few hours in New York was making him quite American! He waited for a car and it ran past him. It took him a little while to realise that in a country so alert and so intelligent, so well ordered, the car people were n't going to waste time by stopping just anywhere, on either side of the intersecting street. If you wanted to get in you had to be on the right corner — one corner for going uptown the other for going down. And when you did get in, the cars were warm, snug. It certainly was a wonderful country. And Broadway — what a street! Its crowds made Piccadilly, the Strand, the French boulevards, or the Friedrichsstrasse look like thirty cents. And the row!

Charles was n't thinking. "Does this car go to Washington Square?" he asked the conductor, or brakeman, or whatever he 's called.

"I guess not," the man replied, and continued his duties.

However, ultimately Charles was shot out and found

himself on the lower end of Fifth Avenue — as quiet after Broadway as Bloomsbury. It was no long walk to Washington Square, and when he got there he thought himself not in New York but in Bath, or Potsdam — anywhere rather than in America. This world surely was ruled not by Taft but by Queen Anne.

It was the Hôtel Frontenac that he was looking for, and he quickly found it. It was the square's one sign of life.

The Hôtel Frontenac is a corner of France. It is like an Embassy: it is French soil. The porter, the first man you see, is, and looks, French; you hear French when you enter the hall; it is French that is being talked between the clerks and the visitors; the advertisements on the wall are in French; you would think, looking at them, that the only boats running to New York from Europe were those of the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique. And this was Charles's idea. He'd dine here. Someone had told him months ago that when you were tired of America you could in New York in a very few minutes find Italy, Germany, Spain — but, most of all, France at the Hôtel Frontenac. As a matter of fact, he was no longer tired of America. He was becoming curious. He felt that after all he'd like the place, and he'd try to make it like him. Perhaps, when it came to the point, it would only be a question of observing a few conventions, of obeying a few rules. A foreigner does n't have such a very good time in London till he's broken through the crust. A Frenchman will tell you that — and so will an American. Charles was going to break

through the crust. But to-night, his first night, he'd rest. He'd give himself time to get acclimatised. He'd order a French dinner; he'd talk French to the waiters; and he'd forget New York.

Pleased by his good accent and by his air of having come from that other land of which every Frenchman thinks so constantly, they found Charles a good table, and they gave him good food. The place was n't crowded: perhaps he was a little early. He sat in a corner away from anyone else and read a French paper, published the day after he'd left Paris, that the Provence had brought in that morning. Paris! It seemed a long way off. What would n't he give to be able to drop down now at this hour — it did n't occur to him to allow for the difference of time — on the Hôtel Meurice and to see what Miss Gorham was doing? He'd left her a week ago, and so many things can happen in a week. Mr. Gorham, according to his own forecast, was n't due yet to rejoin his daughter. He wondered what had happened to the fortune of that cold-blooded old gentleman — no, not cold-blooded: that was the wrong word; Charles thought of the American word "nervy." Certainly Alison's father had nerve. And Charles liked him. He believed he was giving him a square deal. He believed he'd really allow him a chance with Alison. But then — if he did n't tell her anything about Charles's love, how could she be expected to keep free? It was n't any use going over that ground again. He could only hope for the best. And he could write frankly to Mr. Gorham, and, now and again, in a different way, to Alison herself. Perhaps she knew — and would wait. Alison Caerleon.

. . . In the mean time it behoved him to pull himself together and to work — to get work first, and then to show that even in America an Englishman can make a place for himself. And there was his twenty-five thousand dollars — it sounded better, more, when he said it that way.

He pushed away his plate, and took up his eyeglass to polish before looking round the room. People had come in and others had gone out. Charles had been very leisurely over his meal. They had not hustled him. Hardly anyone was left. One or two were amusing to him as a visitor. The French bourgeois altered — and yet altered so little — by foreign travel and foreign trade. In a farther corner by herself a lady was dining. She, too, was French. That, although Charles could n't see her face, was n't difficult to tell. But something about her, about the shape of her head, reminded him vaguely of someone he'd known. Or was it that her head-dress was like some other he'd seen recently. He questioned himself for a moment and then dismissed the subject from his mind as of no importance. Whoever or whatever she might be, and even if she was lovely as the spring, she would be of no use, no interest to him. His one hand was at his eyeglass to take it out, the other was feeling again for the "Matin," when she looked up.

CHAPTER VII

POOR HANDFUL OF BRIGHT SPRING-WATER

EVEN when the lady looked up Charles might easily have failed to recognise her. But her own recognition of him was so immediate, so happy, that his memory was forced to respond. It was the young girl of the Abbaye de Thelême.

And yet she was different. The little blue turban that she wore was the same as she had worn on that fateful night; perhaps the dress was the same — but she herself looked no longer weary; her pallor had gone. Ten days without anxiety had worked that miracle which repose and freedom from being harassed work always in the troubled woman. Looking up, she caught Charles's eye. The thing was inevitable; it was inevitable, too, that he should cross the room to speak to her. Not to do so would be cruel, slighting. She had no awkwardness at this their second encounter.

"I am very glad to see you again, Monsieur. You did me such a service" — her eyes looked for a moment as if at the memory tears might come — "and I fear that at the time I did not thank you, not thank you sufficiently, at all events. . . ."

"You need not thank me. I did not do anything that I would not in such circumstances willingly do again — for you or for any other woman," he added.

"That is not so, Monsieur. And a Frenchman would

have behaved differently. And — may I speak of it? — you gave, you lent me, so much money. Please, now that I have met you, may I not give it back to you? See, I have it upstairs in my room."

"Now, you really make me cross. I was happy to have been of assistance — but I must n't talk about all this now." Charles was still standing up.

"See, Monsieur. I have n't finished my dinner; I'm stopping here: if you have n't finished yours, won't you tell the waiter to bring the rest of it to this table? You are alone, are n't you?"

Charles did n't want to accept this invitation, entirely without design though he believed it to be. He did n't want to talk. He did n't want to make a friend, nor even an acquaintance, of this young girl. In the past, perhaps, he would have felt differently, but not now. . . . Still, he had to do as he was asked.

"But, tell me, what are you doing in New York? I should n't have thought you'd like America?"

"I don't much, but a few days after you saw me my friend brought me over here. I went down to Marseilles to meet him; we took the steamer to Naples, and the next day sailed for this place. We got here yesterday. But please let me go upstairs to get that money."

"I say that you make me very cross. I did n't lend it you. I gave it you. I gave it you to annoy the blackguard who was worrying you, and for my own pleasure, and nothing would induce me to take it back. It'd bring me bad luck. Giving it to you brought me good luck, I do believe" — this was quite a new idea to Charles. It had n't occurred to him before. Indeed, I doubt if

he'd even remembered the existence of the young woman from the moment at which he had parted with her in the Abbaye.

She smiled. "It's kindness makes you say that — but it's *blague*, all the same," she said. "How could *I* bring you luck? You have everything you can want in the world — money, friends, health, happiness. I could see — I saw you afterwards in the restaurant."

"You should n't trust appearances — and nevertheless, I do believe you've been my mascotte. I hope your turning up now means I'm to have some more good luck. I want it: really, I do."

"I'm not sure whether you brought me luck exactly, but I do know that you saved everything for me that night: if it had n't been for you I'd have been finished. As it is, well" — and she shrugged her shoulders and spread her hands. "As it is, I've pulled through this time."

"And you're comfortable, I hope?" Charles asked.

The girl smiled sadly. "Comfortable, yes; happy, no. My friend is generous, and not so bad. He's away now — in — how do you say it? — Chicago."

Charles wished to steer the conversation away from domestic details. They did n't interest him; and besides, the girl was too nice for him to think happily of her in such a relation. He looked at her again. Truly she was pretty, more than pretty. Always her full, small mouth was a little open, her two lips like little cherries. There was something tender about her beauty, unprotected, almost plaintive. And yet her eyes, sad now, suggested happiness: laughter was in

their depths. Like a bird that sings, Charles said to himself.

"But you — why do you say you want good luck now? Tell me about it: if I brought you luck before, perhaps I shall again." She looked concerned. She thought Charles was troubled, and she was troubled herself for him. "You looked so happy when you were in the Abbaye. The lady you were with was so beautiful. She was not your wife — no, nor the wife of your friend?" She asked because it did n't occur to her French mind that a young girl could go to such a place as the Abbaye. Surely the lady must be married to one or other of her companions? She hoped, though, that it was not to Charles.

Charles smiled in his turn. "No, the lady is not my wife; she is the daughter of the gentleman I was with."

"But she is married, surely?"

"No, not married — ah! I see. English and American people have odd ideas. When their daughters are away from home and have reached a certain age, they don't seem to mind where they take them or what they see. It's a pity, perhaps, but there it is."

The Blue Turban nodded. She knew, she did not need to think, that it was a pity. She was a girl too.

Suddenly she put out her hand and placed it over Charles's where it lay on the table. She did it instinctively. Charles knew it was for encouragement. "You will marry her; you love her."

"I love her; but I do not know whether she will marry me."

"She will marry you, for she loves you. Trust me. I

know perhaps better than she knows herself. I watched. I could see her eyes."

"I hope so — but I have not asked her."

"My faith — and why not? Attend: that lady does love you, and that truly. It did not please me. I was not glad to see it. I liked you myself — for more than your kindness. So I could see better, because I cared." She said all this so charmingly, with so much youthful frankness, that Charles could feel no resentment. She had sweet eyes.

"But what are you doing here? You are not American? The lady is. So! I did not know. But she is not here too. Then why are you here? Not that it matters. She will not forget you; she will never do that — nor shall I," she ended lamely.

Charles could n't help it: he 'd been lonely so long; for so long he 'd carried all his difficulties and doubts in his heart. He 'd wanted sympathy, and, meeting it, now was carried away. He did not tell to that candid figure opposite him all his story, all his troubles, but he told enough. How unlike him it was! Reticence was a habit with him, a second nature. To no one of his friends could he have brought himself to speak of what he now cared for more than the world. But those brown eyes drew him to being frank. He found comfort in her beauty, her solicitude for his happiness. Perhaps it was shameful of him to sit there in New York, in a French restaurant, speaking of Alison. But it can be pardoned.

He told her of Mr. Gorham's obduracy and of the task that was set him, and of his real hopelessness. How could he who had never worked hope now to work

with such immediate success that he could return in a year equipped with those weapons Mr. Gorham seemed to think essential? And he told her of his luck at Monte Carlo — "You can see why I think of you as my mascotte, and why the trifle I gave you is as nothing in the balance" — and of how he had some hope that, using this twenty-five thousand dollars as capital, he might perhaps achieve something.

And the more he talked the more thoughtful grew the oval face, the brown eyes. She smiled at him. It was clear that she understood, understood more than his mere words. Charles, who had known no mother or sister, looked at her again, and felt that had he had a sister he would, in spite of everything, have wished her to have something of this young girl's character. . . . He thought of the lines: —

> ". . . Poor handful of bright spring-water
> Flung in the whirlpool's shrieking face."

They both were silent, thinking the same thoughts.

But, first of all, the Frenchwoman is practical. The little Blue Turban suddenly became more alert, more upright. Its wearer brightened: —

"Listen: I want you to think of me as your mascotte. I will be. I will bring you luck. I will bring you luck again. But you must do as I tell you. You have so much money — one hundred and twenty-five thousand francs, you say. And you wish to make more. Naturally. You shall. You must go to the Bourse here, and you must buy some shares. They are called — no, laugh not at how I say it — they are called Michigan and Illinois.

They are cheap now, but after to-morrow — after midday to-morrow — they will be dear, and they will become dearer and dearer. If you will buy all that you can, then shall you make much money — and you shall be grateful to me a little, and you shall not regret that you helped me when I was alone. You must do that. You will not lose your money. I know. No, I cannot tell you how — but I am sure. And now, dear friend, I am going to bed."

She rose and gave Charles her hand, and looked at him. They were quite alone in the restaurant. He took it and looked into her eyes. He could see that she loved him. He raised her hand to his lips and kissed it.

CHAPTER VIII

A LITTLE EXPLANATION

CHARLES walked back to the Knickerbocker. He was sobered; he was unhappy. Astonishing as Broadway was at this hour with its theatres vomiting their audiences, with its million lights, with flashing moving sky-signs — here a bottle of champagne bubbling over, there a chariot race, there a fine lady taking off her stays — astonishing as it all was to an Englishman, yet his mind took in very little. He was thinking. First of Alison and of Paris, and then of the girl he had left. Not a word had she said about herself when once she had answered his questions. She had been concerned for him, grateful and troubled, anxious to do what she could in return for the little help he'd given her. That, of course, was ridiculous, as ridiculous as the idea that he could let her return his sixty pounds. Michigan and Illinois! It sounded like a railway. Anyhow, though, one would n't take a tip of that kind seriously. If it had been in London where he knew something of the ropes, it might have been different. Perhaps then he might have risked a hundred pounds or so. And anyhow, why had n't she told him what made her believe she was doing him a service by giving him this information? Oh, but she had sweet eyes!

And at the Frontenac the young girl as she undressed asked herself the same question. Why had n't she told

this Englishman, whose lips she could still feel on her hand — why had n't she told him how it was she knew that Michigan and Illinois were worth buying? She had n't told him because she was sure that if she had he'd have refused, even though he were convinced that she was right, to have taken any advantage of her advice. As it was, it was just possible that he might believe her. . . . Oh, how she hoped he would! She wished him all that he longed for.

You see, she had not been alone in the hotel. "Monsieur et Madame Finot," the hotel register said. Monsieur Finot was a financier, a financier particularly interested in American affairs. It was Monsieur Finot whom Alison had seen at the Abbaye. Until that morning his companion had had no idea on what particular business he had come to New York and had planned to go to Chicago. Something important, she knew — but its importance was of no moment to her. She had n't even heard the name of Michigan and Illinois until that morning she had been awakened by the sound of Monsieur Finot talking on the telephone, which was at the side of the bed, talking, a little carelessly, perhaps, in French. It was n't the kind of thing she could make any use of, that she'd even listen to. She did n't even know why she had listened, or why, having heard, she had remembered.

"Yes," he was saying. "I go this afternoon to Chicago. And I am sure that everything is clear, perfectly, perfectly clear. I had cables last night both from London and Paris. In London they are ready for to-morrow. In Paris also. Your Mr. Gilder says that — what do you

call him? — Gorham — is quiet, that he is sure he can do nothing. And it's understood: we leave the market alone to-day. Yes, you're right: it'll jump up and down without any assistance from us; but to-morrow at midday we'll begin buying — you, Chicago, London, Amsterdam, Berlin. Oh, yes, of course: I worked out the difference in time. What do you think? . . . I'm not alone . . . ? No, of course, I'm not. No Frenchman ever is. Ah! Yes. Good-bye."

That is what she had heard — but to her quick intelligence it was enough. If you have the Gallic wit you don't require to have every detail explained. She had turned on her side, had been a little peevish with Monsieur Finot at being disturbed in this stupid way by matters which did n't concern her, and, as she fell asleep again, had regretted that she could n't make use of the knowledge she had gained. Still, that kind of thing was n't her business.

She had remembered it just in time!

She knew Monsieur Finot so well. He had come to America to help arrange the matter, and she was sure there'd be no hitch. He'd see to that. Michigan and Illinois would be bought, and if they were worth ten francs to-day they'd be worth twenty to-morrow. He would have laid his nets carefully. And the more money he made out of the deal the more she'd get for herself. But still this Englishman had been so generous, so much a man. And anyhow, with only a hundred and twenty-five thousand francs he could n't upset her friend's plans. If she had thought that possible she'd have bitten her tongue off rather than have told him anything. She

could n't betray Monsieur Finot. Indeed, that reason alone would have been enough to prevent her telling the Englishman all that she knew. But now, perhaps, — oh, how she hoped! — he 'd take her advice, and he 'd invest his money, and he 'd double it or treble it, and he 'd think of her, even though he never saw her again. She 'd always have a place, a little place, in his memory. He was so strong, so clean and loyal. That young American girl was not good enough for him. Still, though, she would get him. That was sure. The women in my story weep constantly. Perhaps it is a feminine habit. I can only answer for these two whom I know. A little yellow head lay on its white pillow and sobbed itself to sleep. If things had only been different!

And Charles? Charles walked home. He could n't get his young French acquaintance out of his mind. She came between him and the morrow, between him and his thoughts of Alison. Of course, all she had said about his investing his money in some railway — he was n't even sure of the name now — was sheer February madness, but she cared for him, and she was unhappy. . . . Was there anything he could do for her? Why do anything? Was n't she as well provided for as was possible? But she had sweet eyes! and he knew she loved him. He would never see her again. She was the last person of his old life; that night's dinner was its last hour. To-morrow at ten o'clock he 'd present his letter of introduction, and then, no doubt, he would have to get busy. Of the three hundred and sixty-five days that a year holds he 'd spent seven. He supposed Mr. Gorham would

count from the day of his sailing. Well, you could do a lot in three hundred and fifty-one days. That allowed seven for his voyagé back. The truth is, Charles was sleepy. He could n't keep awake. His dreams were as much of a little blue turban in New York, as of Alison in Paris.

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH THE AMIABLE CHARLES PRESENTS HIS LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND GOES INTO WALL STREET

COMING down to breakfast the next morning, his first in New York, Charles wandered across to the news-stand. "Which is the most American, the most un-English, of all these papers?" he asked the pretty shirtwaist who was cheerfully engaged in taking three cents for a two-cent article. You see, he wanted something that was really in the picture, that would, most quickly, let him, a stranger, into the secret of this great city, this turmoil, this jungle.

"Try the 'New York American,'" she answered. "I don't believe that's English."

Charles, who, still in pursuit of atmosphere, of local colour, had started his breakfast with stewed pears and cream and had gone on to sausages, maple syrup and buckwheat cakes, — all together, — soon found out that she was right. The paper was n't English, it was n't even in English. That 's why he liked it. "I 'll take this in," he said to himself. "When I 'm rich and get back to England I 'll have a 'New York American' every morning. It 'll prevent things being dull. I can show it to people who abuse the 'Daily Mail.'" Not that he found in its pages much that was craggy to break the mind upon. He read at it all, even the advertisements, and came at last to the financial page. He might as well

read that, too, especially as the letter of introduction he was to present would take him into what he believed was the financial district — somewhere at the other end of Broadway. He did n't understand much of it — but then, if the truth were told, he had n't understood more than a half even of the pages that dealt with such every-day events as railroad collisions, the last scandal in some European royal family, murder, and sudden death. He did understand one thing, though, and that was that Michigan and Illinois — the name he recalled of the stock his young French acquaintance had urged on him so earnestly — was creating quite a little flurry in Wall Street. It had gone down so much during the last ten days that it had seemed that on the morning of which the financial expert was writing it could n't go down any more. But it had continued its evil course — it had gone down a lot. And this was the stock that the Blue Turban had begged him to buy! He read on. The expert seemed to think that now at last the bottom must be reached. All the weak holders must have been shaken out and have reached the earth long ago. Surely the balloon would go up again. The expert did n't put it so baldly as that; he did n't prophesy — but he reminded his readers of one or two occasions when railroad stock of this kind had had a sharp and continued rally after a week or so of selling.

Did n't this rather fit in with what he 'd been told overnight? Charles began to wonder whether there was n't something in the advice he'd been given, after all. It had been foolish of him not to have pressed for more details. No. That would have been to take it

seriously; and even though he acted on it now, as one might back a horse on any casual tip, yet it was sure that he had n't taken it seriously. Should he take a flyer at the game? — he thought that was the right American phrase. Should he try to make a little money? He pretended to himself that he'd think it over, but he knew perfectly well that he'd already decided. But it was time to go downtown. He could come back later on and institute inquiries of those members of the New York Stock Exchange who seemed to have an office in the hotel itself. A convenient idea, that. The money you don't spend on rooms, valet service, and complicated American dishes, you can lay out on mining shares or railway bonds. You can either leave the hotel earlier or stop longer, according to your luck.

In the subway station Charles bought an evening paper — the "Post." It was very much more conservative, he found. It gave him no thrills, but, in a different way and in a very different manner, its financial man was a good deal worked up about Michigan and Illinois. He, too, thought it possible there'd be a reaction. But when, and whether it'd be intermittent, were matters about which he offered no opinion.

Charles began to think.

Ill news travels fast. No one in New York outside the very small circle of people who were in "Old Man Pyle's" confidence in the working of his Michigan and Illinois pool, knew that Mr. Gorham had been put out of operation. But one or other must have dropped a hint that the Gorham Waterloo was approaching. It must

have been suggested that all was n't right with the Gorham interests. The Zulus have some wonderful method — so far unexplained, I believe — of signalling news over vast tracts of country. The same thing happens in Wall Street, and even sometimes in the districts around Angel Court.

And so when Charles presented his letter of introduction it was n't fancy that made him believe his reception was rather frigid. The letter itself ought to have carried him into the good graces of any one of Mr. Gorham's friends; it was n't enthusiastic, but it made it perfectly clear that the financier wished Charles well, and that if his correspondent, Mr. Hepburn Z. Davison, could help him along he'd be obliged. It said that its bearer wanted a chance — that he was capable, interested in railways, would begin at the foot of the ladder, and so on. Its delivery was after the fair. Charles would have found a very different welcome if he had brought it a month earlier. Mr. Davison was n't a business associate of Mr. Gorham's; his fortunes would be untouched, whatever happened to his absent friend. But he was a man who liked to row in with success, and something or other made him know that Mr. Gorham was under a cloud. Charles suffered accordingly. Mr. Davison was polite. He drew Charles out. He discovered that his knowledge of railways, even of English railways, was merely the result of schoolboy interest and amateur curiosity, that he'd never done a stroke of work in his life. He looked at Charles's eyeglass; he looked at his spats. Charles was uncomfortable. Nevertheless, Mr. Davison was cordial, in a frigid way. Yes, he would

be delighted to be of service to any friend of Mr. Gorham's. He would inquire. Of course, yes, of course, openings of a really promising kind were n't easy to find — but still he'd be delighted to do what he could. He drew his lips back from his very white and even teeth, and smiled like a wolf. And where was Charles stopping? At the Knickerbocker? Indeed! That was right in the theatre quarter, was n't it? Mr. Caerleon must come and see him again. And in the mean time he'd look round. He'd write as soon as he could, and then, looking at Charles's card again and at Mr. Gorham's letter: —

"You must come and dine with us one evening, Mr. Caerleon, and go to the play. I'd like you to see our New York actors. Mrs. Davison'll be delighted."

Even an American is attracted by a title, though it be but a courtesy one.

Now Charles, although he had n't done a stroke of work in his life, was no fool. I hope I have n't given you the impression that he was. I certainly did n't mean to. He tumbled to the inwardness of Mr. Davison's attitude almost as soon as he entered the room. And after that, while he fidgeted under his cold scrutiny, and gave one ear to the platitudes that were being uttered, his mind was working on its own account. He realised that he was n't going to drop into a soft and immediate job through any patronage of which Mr. Davison might dispose. As a result, he did a rather foolish thing. When Mr. Davison had finished what he had to say and was evidently prepared to get rid of him as quickly as possible, he broke in: —

"Mr. Davison, there is something you can help me in now. I want to know of, to have an introduction to, if possible, a good stockbroker. It's so easy for a stranger to get hold of the wrong kind of people. I wonder whether you'd tell me of someone I'd be safe with?"

Mr. Davison evidently did n't like the idea, did n't approve of it. He darted a glance at Charles, examined him in a flash, comprehensively from top to toe.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Caerleon, I can tell you of a broker easily enough. But if you'll take the advice of a man much older than yourself — and much more experienced, I think," — he bared his teeth again in an automatic smile, — "you'll keep out of Wall Street. Still, that's your business. Sit down; I'll write you a line to my friends Capper, Zanthro and Company. You'll be safe with them. They're conservative." And he sat down at his desk and wrote with his own hand the briefest of letters, introducing "Mr. Charles Caerleon, who has just arrived from London and who wants a broker on whom he can implicitly rely." Charles thanked him and went away. He did n't know that before the elevator had reached the street level Mr. Davison had got Mr. Capper on the telephone, and was telling him that all he knew about the gentleman who was coming round with a note was that he'd come to him with a letter from a friend in England, and that nobody in Mr. Capper's business was to think that he, Davison, would answer for his having a cent. Mr. Capper quite understood.

Charles did feel rather like a sheep as he walked into the palatial offices of Capper, Zanthro and Company.

I can't describe them to you. I've never been in Wall Street — in that sense, anyway. I have to go on what Charles has told me. And, as by and by you'll understand, he not unnaturally looked back on that episode in his career as a sort of Thousand and Second Night. He brought away few clear impressions.

So he announced himself by handing to the doorkeeper his own card and Mr. Davison's letter; and as Mr. Davison was a person of some importance in this world of cash values, he was n't kept waiting more than a minute. The private office he was shown into was something new in his experience. In the middle was a huge roll-top desk of metal. It carried three telephones. It was a big room, but there was hardly any free space in it. The walls were crowded with what at first sight looked like indifferent oleographs, but which Charles afterwards identified as bad examples of the worst period of English painting, — I take the worst period to be the late Victorian, — of the Barbizon School, of recent German. The floor was largely covered with massive bronzes — busts, dying warriors, elephants, and so on. You'd have looked in vain for anything really good as a work of art. Mr. Capper had no taste; he only had money, and a love for posing as a patron of the fine arts. And he liked to be busy all the time at this respectable hobby. He liked to have dealers write to him by every mail from London and Paris and offer him unique examples. He liked to buy something every few days. When he'd bought it he generally forgot all about it.

Mr. Capper was seated at his desk. He had an intellectual forehead. Charles thought that it was perhaps

in the wish to do something worthy of this forehead that he'd taken up the arts.

"Take a seat, Mr. Caerleon, take a seat. I'm mighty glad to know you, sir. Mr. Davison says you want a broker. I hope we can fix you up. What exactly can we do for you?"

He did n't give Charles any time to "get acquainted," and, indeed, the shocking taste of the objects in his room, his high forehead, and the rapidity with which he fired out his words, almost frightened the Englishman away. But Charles had come for a purpose. Mr. Gorham's friend had said that Capper, Zanthro and Company were trustworthy. He did n't see how you could doubt the respectability of a man who had such a Sidney Cooper on one side of him and such a Diaz on the other. If he went away he might fare worse — and also he might lose time. Time, he had an idea, was the essence of the matter. It was to be only a question of minutes before the stock in which he was interested would be soaring up. . . . So Charles, even while he thought that at last he had discovered on what prey the second-rate dealers of London and Paris lived, pulled himself together.

"Mr. Capper, I should like to know, as I'm thinking of having a mild flutter," — the American language was not yet altogether ascendant, — "what you think of Michigan and Illinois, if you'll be kind enough to tell me."

"Michigan and Illinois — oh, well, yes — um," — Mr. Capper wrinkled his broad forehead in an impressive manner and looked round at his possessions, — "Capper,

Zanthro and Company don't like to express an opinion about the stock their clients are interested in. It's so easy to be wrong. But you, Mr. Caerleon, have come with so good an introduction, and you are an Englishman. I must make an exception in your case. Of course you want to sell. Naturally. I think they'll go down a little more and then stop down for a while. Nothing will go up. It's a bear market. And it'll remain so until this disgraceful attempt on Colonel Roosevelt's part to get the Republican nomination is finally disposed of — it's scandalous; but you're not interested in our politics, Mr. Caerleon. Let's stick to business. Here, I'll be very frank, although it's against my interest: I think that, whatever you propose to deal in, the present market's a very good one to stop out of. There may be a rally. You never know: M. and I. may go up — a point or two. *I* don't think so, but they won't ask my permission. Still, if you do want a flutter — that's what you called it, did n't you? I like to learn English slang; it's so expressive — I dare say you'll be as safe selling a bear of that stock as in anything else."

"But I don't want to sell a bear — I don't want to sell Michigan and Illinois. I want to buy — I want to buy as many as I can afford."

"To buy! But you must be mad, Mr. Caerleon. Excuse me. Of course if you want to buy, and to pay for, and to put the scrip away — all right, well and good. Some day, when Taft's got his second term all right and the market's pulled itself together, you'll perhaps find you've made something. But what do you want to buy M. and I. for? Is it too much to ask?"

Charles could n't answer the question. He 'd have had some difficulty in answering it even to himself. To buy a stock simply because it was recommended to him by a little French *demi-mondaine*, as new to the country as he was himself, did n't suggest itself to him as a satisfactory reason.

"Oh, I don't know, Mr. Capper. I just have a hunch that it 's a stock worth buying at this moment."

"Well, young man, perhaps you 're right. It 'll be your funeral. The stock 's gone down steadily for days and days — no, not steadily: there have been little rallies. They did n't amount to anything, though. If indications count for anything it 'll continue to go down. But I've said all that. What exactly do you propose we should do for you?"

Charles put his hand into the opening of his waistcoat and pulled out his carefully folded Bank of England notes. Mr. Capper, with his shoddy bronzes and his imitation Millets, had unbalanced him a little. He had n't intended to go the whole hog. But why not, while he was about it? He was rather at sea as to the procedure, but he drew quickly on his memory of American financial novels.

"Mr. Capper, here are five Bank of England notes; each is for a thousand pounds — roughly, I suppose, twenty-five thousand dollars in your money altogether. I want you to buy at once for me as much Michigan and Illinois shares as this will carry — on margin, I mean: you do call it margin, don't you? But stop. How does the stock go? I mean, does it go up or down a dollar a time or does it jump or drop several dollars?"

"Heaven knows, Mr. Caerleon. It was thirty-seven yesterday when the Exchange opened. It was thirty-two when it closed. I really don't know what it is now. I'll find out" — and he looked at the door. Presumably he touched some bell with his foot.

A clerk came in, a meagre person. "What's M. and I. now?" Mr. Capper asked.

The clerk was well posted. "Twenty-nine seven-eighths, and going down all the time."

Mr. Capper looked at Charles. "You see, it's *not* a market to buy in. It's dropping all the time, is n't it, Mr. Murphy?" Mr. Murphy, who was more like a shadow than an Irishman, assented.

"That answers my question, Mr. Capper," Charles said. He glanced at the ormulu clock. It was eleven minutes to twelve. "Let's suppose — and I take it that even that drop's pretty unlikely — that the drop can't be more than a dollar a time. There are five dollars in a pound. Buy me twenty thousand of the stock. That gives a dollar margin — and leaves a little for contingencies."

Mr. Capper jumped in his chair. He was n't very used to English fools. He looked at Mr. Murphy, and then at his mad client. But Charles did n't look mad.

"I'll say again, Mr. Caerleon, that it's your funeral. I hope you've got a lot more notes like these. You'll want them if you're coming into Wall Street on this scale. All the same, if twenty-five thousand dollars is all you're going to put down, I'll take the liberty of reducing your order. Hurry, though, Mr. Murphy. Buy Mr. Caerleon five thousand M. and I. at the market. Come

back at once." Mr. Murphy slipped through the door. "Twenty thousand 's too many with this margin, Mr. Caerleon. You 'll excuse me, but we 're from Missouri here, and we 'll presume for the moment that that 's all you 've got to lose. Where 'd we be if the stock ran away like the Gadarene swine? In the cart, you call it, don't you? Yes, ten thousand 's enough. Mr. Murphy 'll be back in a moment, and then I 'll tell him to buy another five thousand. Or no, I 'll give the order myself." He turned to his telephone that connected with the floor of the Exchange, and after a moment's delay told someone to buy five thousand M. and I. right away — and then to report.

Mr. Murphy came back. "It 's done: twenty-nine five-eighths 's the price."

The telephone bell rang. Mr. Capper attended to it. He repeated what he heard. "They 've bought you the other five thousand: twenty-nine and a half."

Charles, who was used to gambling in thousand-franc notes but not in thousands of pounds at a time, felt his spine turning to water. But he did n't propose to let Mr. Capper see that. He was in the soup now, and he must trust to his good luck. He seemed to have lost five thousand eighths of a dollar already. One hundred and twenty-five pounds! "Gee whizz!" But he said that to himself. He 'd be ruined when this had happened thirty-eight times more. It would take about twenty minutes at the present rate! He looked at his watch. Three minutes to twelve.

Mr. Capper was n't one of those brokers who kept a ticker in his own private office. He only kept a desk

there, three telephones, and a medley of costly rubbish. His affectation was that he was a lover of art first and a broker afterwards. And he was supposed to frown on undue speculation. He engaged Charles now in a little genial conversation. It did n't advance far. Mr. Murphy came in again. "I thought you 'd wish to know that M. and I.'s down to twenty-eight seven-eighths. There seems no end to the selling." Mr. Capper told him to clear out and to come back when it was down another quarter, and then he looked at Charles once more — a process of which both he and his client were a little tired. "Mr. Caerleon, you've lost round about fourteen hundred pounds in your money; say seven thousand dollars. Would n't you like to quit?"

Nothing would have pleased Charles better. He'd have liked to quit and to come back in a quarter of an hour and to start again. He 'd started too soon, he supposed. But there was something in Mr. Capper's eye that irritated him. A gambler often feels like that. "Confound it all," he says, "I'll show them I can lose!" He felt this specially with Mr. Capper. He would n't show the white feather before such an American. No, indeed.

"Thanks, Mr. Capper; I appreciate your good advice. But I'll hang on. Perhaps it's reached the bottom now."

"Perhaps; but why should it?" — and even as he spoke, Murphy, bird of ill omen, appeared.

"It's gone off another quarter."

Mr. Capper drew a long breath and looked commiseratingly at Charles. "That ought to settle it, Mr.

Caerleon. Wait, Mr. Murphy. Look here: let's close this transaction, Mr. Caerleon. You'll lose a lot more in a few minutes."

"Mr. Murphy need n't wait for me, Mr. Capper," Charles answered. He was considerably rattled, but he'd give nothing of his state of mind away. "I put down that twenty-five thousand dollars as margin. I've not lost half of it yet —"

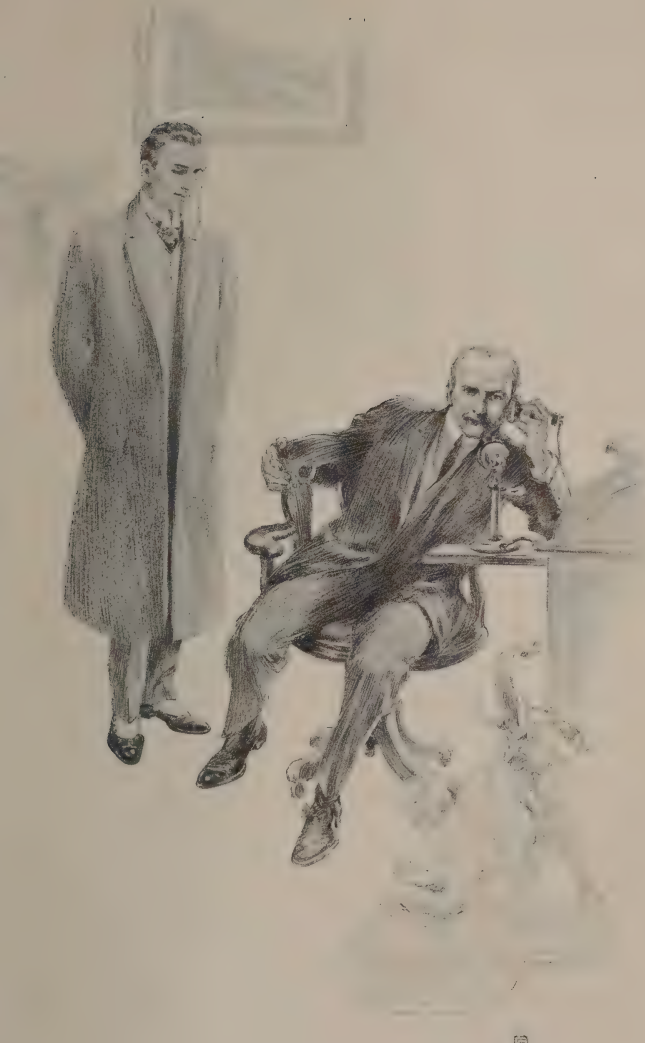
"Pretty near," was Mr. Capper's happy interruption.

"Yes, and perhaps half has gone by now. But I put it down prepared to lose it, and if I'm not in your way, I'll see it out — I shan't keep you long, if you're right."

Mr. Capper was getting rattled himself. He rang up on the telephone again. "Showing every sign of going on dropping, is it? Twenty-eight and a half now." Charles listened. He yawned — not because he was tired, but because his nerves were giving way. He thought of nothing at all. His mind was a blank.

Mr. Murphy came back once more — with a repetition of the news that Mr. Capper had just gained on the telephone. "Oh, get out," Charles wanted to say. He'd have liked to throw a rotten little couchant leopard that was near his elbow at the man's stupid head.

Suddenly, however, Charles's wits returned. He felt master of himself again. He was ashamed. What had happened might have been anticipated. It was n't till midday or something of the kind that Michigan and Illinois was to start going up. If he was paying any attention at all to what had been told him last night,



GOING ON DROPPING, IS IT?

then it certainly behoved him to pay attention to the whole of it. Now it was simply a question of the correctness of the information, and, in the event of it's being correct, whether his twenty-five thousand dollars would enable him to hold out till the market turned. The next quarter of an hour would answer that question. And if what he had was swept away — well, he'd be where he was before he went to Monte Carlo. No better and no worse off. He turned to Mr. Capper, who, having come to the conclusion that his new client was beyond saving, was engaged in an attempt to understand an article on Houdon in the "Burlington."

"It's very interesting to see a collection like this, Mr. Capper; but your French paintings seem to stop with the Barbizon people. Don't you take any interest in the Impressionists, say? And what about the modern men? Cottet — Vuillard — Simon. I take it for granted you don't like the *cubistes*, so I won't ask about them."

Charles was bluffing, of course. He was n't as cool as all that. His senses were alert to hear the step of Mr. Murphy and more bad news. Still he took Mr. Capper in.

"I don't approve of the tendencies of modern French art, Mr. Caerleon" — and Mr. Capper again wrinkled his forehead, and looked prophetic. "Mark my words, none of the men nowadays will be remembered in twenty years. And as for the Impressionists, I would n't give that for them, sir. They have no sense of beauty, no reverence, no patience, no technique."

Charles thought he'd read something suspiciously like that in the duller English newspapers. He was just

on the point of declaring his own sense of Mr. Capper's wrongness when the door opened. It was Mr. Murphy.

"M. and I. has taken a turn, Mr. Capper. It's a quarter up from what I last told you —" He was cut short by the telephone bell. Mr. Capper turned to it.

"Hullo. M. and I. up, is it? I'd just heard. Lots of buying orders suddenly. Same as yesterday, I expect: don't you? Just a temporary rally. What's it now? Twenty-eight seven-eighths. Thanks. Ring up again in a few minutes, Marsh, will you? I want to hear if the buying continues." And then, turning to Charles, "Well, it's coming your way a little now, Mr. Caerleon. Let's hope it'll come far enough. If you take my advice, you'll close the deal if it once gets over thirty. That'd let you out."

"We'll see," Charles answered. "But to go back to what we were talking about. Do you seriously mean to tell me that Manet's got no technique, that Monet's got no beauty? And although it's difficult to see what you've got here among all your beautiful things, yet I don't notice any Carpeaux or any Dalous among your bronzes."

Charles was getting Mr. Capper on the raw. It was a good thing that the broker did n't control the movements of M. and I. They'd have gone down with a flop, if he had. He did n't like having his taste questioned. And besides, he really did n't know what Charles was talking about. He had n't the slightest idea of what technique was in relation to painting. He'd heard of Manet and Monet, but he had n't heard of the other

painters Charles had mentioned, and he was n't clear whether Carpeaux was a kind of bronze or a sculptor. In any case, his reason for not buying the later French men was that they cost more than he cared to risk. He followed the line of least resistance in his purchases. Dealers offered him what they knew he'd take. He was in their books as a jay. He'd take anything as long as it did n't come over a certain figure, and as long as he could be induced to think it was high art. Of course his Millets were forgeries; his Diaz was about as bad as it could be; Corot never put that careless signature on the woodland scene that he had over the mantelpiece in his Long Island drawing-room.

"When you've been collecting and studying art as long as I have, Mr. Caerleon, you'll know what is worth while and what is n't. You'll have a taste that'll tell you that some things are meretricious and won't last. You'll realise that you can't buy all schools, the bad as well as the good." The strange thing was that Mr. Capper really believed in all his truck; he really believed in his own taste, his own prescience. The dealers who had him in tow had managed him well. One of them had been very clever. Every now and then, when he was on one of his American forays, he'd drop into Mr. Capper's office and would ask after such and such a picture or bronze he'd sold him. "Oh, I've got that at home," Mr. Capper would answer. "It's been greatly admired." The dealer would sigh. "Yes, I know. I ought never to have sold it to you. I suppose you would n't like to let me have it back at twice what you gave? I wish you would. I don't mind telling you that the Louvre came

after it, and are always reminding me now that I ought to have asked them before I let it go to America. They'd take it now, and, even if I pay twice what you paid, I'll make a handsome profit." He had, that dealer, all the appearance of extreme frankness. And he knew his customer. Never once had Mr. Capper taken his offer. He thought, did this brilliant collector, that he knew a rising market when he saw one.

It was, however, no part of Charles's programme to irritate Mr. Capper's self-complacency. He got up and began to examine the crowded walls.

"So that's a Troyon, is it? A very unusual and curious example. . . ." But he was not to be allowed to browse at will in this museum of curiosities. The telephone bell rang again. He turned round. Mr. Capper looked at him and held his hand up. In a minute he hung up the receiver.

"Well, Mr. Caerleon, you seem to have dropped into Wall Street at the — what do they call it? — the psychological moment for M. and I. My man tells me there's a great deal of buying, and that there seem to be orders, judging by the firms who are dealing, both from Europe and the West."

"What's the stock now, though, Mr. Capper?"

"It was thirty and five-eighths a minute or two ago. I'll give you advice again, Mr. Caerleon. I told you that this is a good time to keep out of the market — it's a better time to get out of it, especially if you can do so at a profit. I hate to see our clients lose. Now just write me a memorandum to sell your shares when it's reached thirty-two. Personally, I'd like to sell it now, but I don't

suppose you'd stand for that?" He looked at Charles, who shook his head.

"Well, if indications count for anything, it'll go up for a while. Three or four dollars, perhaps. Let's suppose that you get out at thirty-four: you'll be five points to the good. You've got ten thousand, bought at twenty-nine five-eighths and twenty-nine and a half. You'd have cleared over five thousand pounds in your money."

Charles took out a pencil and asked for a bit of paper. He made some rapid calculations, and then: —

"Mr. Capper, is n't there something you call pyramiding on this side of the water? What I mean is, can't I use my profits as further margin?"

"You can if you like, certainly, Mr. Caerleon." This Englishman was a very nervy proposition.

"Well, I've made ten thousand dollars on the last price given you. That's two thousand pounds. If I'm right, ask your clerk, please, to buy me another ten thousand as quick as he can, and to start buying an additional five thousand at each dollar advance. Please do it at once."

Mr. Capper summoned Mr. Murphy and repeated the instructions. Mr. Murphy blinked and disappeared.

"I'd better write that down, Mr. Capper; and I want to add something more."

"Yes, you'd better, Mr. Caerleon. Don't let's have any misunderstanding. Come and sit here," and he swept on one side a lot of Christie's catalogues so as to make a clear place for Charles to write.

Charles was very business-like. Was n't this his first day of real work?

To Messrs. Capper, Zanthro and Company.

Having bought for me this morning five thousand Michigan and Illinois at twenty-nine and five-eighths and five thousand at twenty-nine and a half, please buy an additional ten thousand now that the price is thirty and five-eighths, and start buying an additional five thousand at thirty-one and at each even dollar advance, until forty is reached. At that point start buying ten thousand, and start buying ten thousand more at each dollar advance. If there's a drop, hold on to the stock as long as my margin is sufficient; but if it's nearly swept away, sell at the point that your own interests demand that you should avoid risk. But don't sell till you have to.

Charles Caerleon.
(Knickerbocker Hotel.)

He blotted the paper and handed it to Mr. Capper.

"Is that clear, Mr. Capper?"

Mr. Capper read it, and whistled, and whistled again. "Yes, it's quite clear, Mr. Caerleon. It's also, if I may say so, rather mad. Is n't there a phrase in England — going for the gloves? Is that what you're doing?"

"Oh, I don't know." Charles got up and took his hat and stick. "I don't know that I'm going for the gloves, but I do know that Michigan and Illinois is going up. I 'll see something of New York now. I've got the Baedeker map in my pocket. But please tell me, Mr. Capper, am I right in believing that it'd be worth my while to go right down to the end of the island —the Battery, they call it, don't they?"

Mr. Capper wondered if he'd misjudged the English character. All he could say was, that it would be very well worth Mr. Caerleon's while to go and see the Battery; but had n't he better stay where he was now and see what was happening to his stock?

Charles thought not. "You see, I've only been here since yesterday morning, Mr. Capper. I'd like to know more of your city. And I must get some lunch. That stock's all right. It'll go up all the time. You see. You'll let a clerk give me a copy of that paper, won't you, so that there may n't be any misapprehension in my mind as to what my instructions were. I'll come back for it after lunch."

Mr. Capper answered that of course a copy would be made, and Mr. Murphy, appearing opportunely, was given the paper as Mr. Caerleon's last instructions. "M. and I.'s at thirty-one and a half now."

Mr. Capper became human under these signs of his client's prosperity. "You're going some, young man," he said. "I'd like to show you some of this section of the city myself, and take you to the club to lunch, especially as you're a stranger; but I guess I'd better stop here and keep an eye on your stock."

"I hate to spoil your lunch, Mr. Capper; but still, if you think so — Tell me one thing, though, before I go. Is Michigan and Illinois a railway?"

Mr. Capper is never sure whether he answered that question.

CHAPTER X

IN WHICH THE LITTLE BLUE TURBAN PROVES HERSELF A VERY MASCOTTE

CHARLES did find the Battery very much worth while, but he was hardly in fit state to appreciate the beauties it commanded. It is n't to be wondered at that his mind was in a ferment. He had n't made quite five thousand pounds that morning, but he was most of the road to their making; Mr. Capper had talked on that basis. What ought he to do? Ought he to sell out? He thought not. After all, he was here to make money. And he had no other interest to his hand. Besides, it would be flying in the face of Providence to quit at the very moment when everything was coming his way, when all was happening as he had been told it would.

And there was another reason for his disquiet. He'd passed, as he walked down Broadway, the steamship offices. He had had to take a grip on himself to avoid going to the Cunard office and booking a passage in the very ship that had brought him over. And then when he got down to the Battery the first thing he saw was a boat starting for the other side. It made a brave show in the sunshine.

Charles was lonely, and he was homesick.

Later on, in a rather more cheerful mood, and having lunched, Charles went back to Wall Street and the office

of Messrs. Capper, Zanthro and Company. He was n't in any hurry: he'd had as much excitement as he cared for for one day. He did n't want to take up again this tale of eighths and quarters. But it was certainly necessary to return. Perhaps he'd have reached the fifteen thousand by now. He was a little curious about his brokers, too. Mr. Capper's office, with all its gimcrack contents, did n't evoke any great confidence. True, he had n't really seen it. He'd only seen an anteroom, from which he'd been ushered straight into Mr. Capper's private room. How different that was, though, from his conception of a Wall Street office! This time, entering the anteroom and finding it for the moment untenanted, he pushed through into the farther rooms. There he found the real thing. This was what he'd read about. Here were enough tape machines, enough clerks, and enough clients, too, apparently, if he could judge from the fact that there were several people sitting about who did n't seem to have any work to do. There was also a large blackboard with words and hieroglyphics on it. But Charles was n't allowed to look round for long unattended. Mr. Murphy rushed across the room. "Come, Mr. Caerleon, come in to Mr. Capper. He's been asking for you."

Mr. Capper had, indeed, been asking for Charles. He was walking to and fro and more than a little worried at the non-appearance of his client. Michigan and Illinois had increased its upward pace. Its last price was thirty-nine seven-eighths. The execution of his client's instructions was n't easy. You don't buy big block of stock after big block by just nodding your head. It

wanted some doing. He could n't understand why Charles had n't come back. Seeing him, he started at once: —

"Mr. Caerleon, I wonder you were n't in before. You still want us to hold on to that stock? Don't you think you 'd better clear out now?"

"Why, has it been going down?" Charles did n't think it had, but thought he 'd better speak as if he was prepared for eventualities.

"Going down! Do you mean to tell me you've not seen? Why, it 's worrying the whole 'Change."

"Yes, but has it gone down? Have I lost all I've made?"

"No, sir. You have *not;* the blessed stock 's at more than forty now, I should think. You must have made more than a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, what with your first purchases and what we've bought for you since."

"Oh, well, Mr. Capper, if it 's as good as that" — Charles was being purposely slow in his manner of speaking; he did n't exactly want to irritate the broker, but he did wish to show that Englishmen did n't get so very easily excited — "and if it 's reached forty, you've started buying me ten thousand at each point advance. Is n't that so?"

"Yes, it is, and I don't mind telling you that, glad as we are to have a good customer, it 's giving us plenty of work. I've been on the floor myself. You're not the only man who is buying. Of course, there 's the crowd who are buying small lots just because the stock 's going up, but there are several other big buyers, acting, as far

as I can see, for the big fellows. The bears are getting frightened, too; there's a lot of bear closing."

Charles did n't know who the "big fellows" were, and he had n't time to ask. He supposed they were the men whose purchases were to send the stock up. Certainly, they'd done their work.

"I'm grateful to you, Mr. Capper, for the trouble you're taking. How much stock have I got now? I wonder if you can tell me?"

"I can't: we're placing your orders as fast as ever we can. But Murphy will know how you stand. I'll ask. . . . Mr. Murphy, how much stock has Mr. Caerleon now?"

"We've just started buying Mr. Caerleon's third ten thousand. The stock's over forty-two now. That'll make his holding ninety-five thousand."

"That ought to be enough even for an Englishman, Mr. Caerleon," Mr. Capper said. "Shall we stop buying now?"

"No, Mr. Capper, but you can stop buying when you've bought me another two hundred thousand; that'll be when the stock reaches sixty-two, or something over, according to the trouble you have in getting it, I suppose."

"And can we start selling — discreetly, of course — at the first dollar rise after all your orders are executed?"

"You may not. But now tell me: how much do I make with each dollar advance on the basis of my present ninety-five thousand?"

"Why, that's simple. With every dollar advance you

make ninety-five thousand dollars — not much less than twenty thousand pounds in your money."

Charles did not find it very easy to control his emotion. He took out his case and selected a cigarette. "May I smoke, Mr. Capper?"

Mr. Capper objected very much to anyone smoking among his treasures, but he did n't say so.

Charles's brain had n't really grasped the figures he 'd been given. He realised that by some extraordinary fortune he was on the crest of the wave, that he was making more money than he 'd ever dreamed of having, but what it all meant he had n't thought. Perhaps if he had been better prepared for these possibilities he 'd have understood more clearly, and would have been more moved. Twenty thousand pounds every two or three minutes — that was about what it worked out at.

He thought he 'd better leave Mr. Capper to his treasures and to the execution of his new instructions. Perhaps if he went back to the Knickerbocker and had a hot bath he 'd feel less rattled.

"Well, I 'm going. I 'll look in again to-morrow morning. It 's understood you cease buying for me after I 've got two hundred and ninety-five thousand. That 's so, is n't it? And oh, tell me — I know some of the names of your magnates here — who are the 'big fellows' you speak of as perhaps buying Michigan and Illinois?"

"I can't say with any certainty. But Ream is buying, I think: it 's a pool, I fancy. One does n't know what they 're aiming at. Control, perhaps. Pyle's in it, too, I 'm pretty sure —"

"Oh, Pyle — what do they call him? Has n't he got some sort of nickname?"

"Not a nickname exactly, but people call him 'Old Man Pyle' generally. If I'm right and he's in this deal, he won't like you, you can bet your bottom dollar. 'Old Man Pyle' don't approve of anyone butting in when he's doing business."

Charles's brain began to go round and round. So he was interfering with "Old Man Pyle's" game, was he — with "Old Man Pyle," who was responsible for Mr. Gorham's kidnapping? What an odd mix-up!

Making some excuses to Mr. Capper, who did n't wish him to leave, and telling him that he did n't think he'd be anywhere where he could be called on the telephone till after midnight, Charles started to go away. Mr. Capper was full of respect for his English client now. "I've sent a card for you to the University Club and one to the Union League, Mr. Caerleon: they're both comfortable. You can go straight to either of them, if you like. But I wish you'd stop here till the Exchange closes."

Charles shook his head, expressed his gratitude for the cards, and beat a retreat. He wanted air.

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH THE AMIABLE CHARLES HAS AN ENTIRELY NOVEL SENSATION—AND ONE OF WHICH FEW OF US CAN BOAST

IN vulgar phrase, Charles did n't know whether he was standing on his head or his heels. Here he was in New York. He'd reached it yesterday, and already within thirty-six hours he'd made as many thousand pounds. He felt he was Aladdin's friend, or that Second Calendar, son of a King, on whom so many mysterious things had been so vehemently enjoined. In the heart of New York, among Americans, it had behoved him to be self-possessed: he thought he'd carried himself well enough. But now — oh, thirty thousand pounds! Perhaps only his pride had prevented his seizing them at the moment he knew he'd made them. He felt now that in the background of all that had passed, Alison's eyes had watched him. Thirty thousand pounds! Would n't that alter Mr. Gorham's whole attitude?

I've said somewhere that Charles had contradictory sides to his character. Indeed, it was true. And one of the sides, one of the facets, was of extreme common sense. He knew, and he did n't conceal from himself as he walked up Broadway past Grace Church and the Wanamaker store, that thirty thousand pounds might in the present circumstances make all the difference with

Mr. Gorham — but that he'd think worse of Mr. Gorham if it did. After all, what were thirty thousand pounds? An income of fifteen hundred pounds, at the most. That, in Mr. Gorham's view, would pay for the upkeep of his daughter's cars! And it had n't been earned — unless anxiety earns money! He might as well have tried to tempt Mr. Gorham with the initial five thousand of his new fortune. Mr. Gorham had laid stress on his working, on his actually earning money.

Charles argued with himself as he walked. Mr. Gorham had intended that Mr. Davison should find him work. That was clear. Mr. Davison was n't likely to. That, too, was clear. In the circumstances, he must take advantage of everything that came his way. Add what had just come — provided it had n't, like fairy gold, vanished in the morning! — to what he'd brought from Monte Carlo, and he'd got enough to use with some chance of success, granted any share of fortune. Remained the problem of whether or not in the morning he should be satisfied with his profit, and promptly sell out. That problem should rest for a few hours. He would n't attempt to decide it until after to-morrow's breakfast.

And he was damned if he'd find out the afternoon happenings to Michigan and Illinois in the paper, either. The fates had helped him. He'd leave himself in their hands.

Arrived at his hotel, Charles went to his room and at once into a hot bath. He lay in it — and thought and thought. Hot baths were a habit with him. He thought of Alison, of his luck since he had left her at the Gare

de Lyon, of the share the young Frenchwoman had had in what had happened, of Mr. Gorham's fortunes: his mind would n't be still — it ran to and fro like a squirrel. Never in the whole of the thirty-three years of his life could he remember — unless it had been a week ago at Monte Carlo — being afraid of the emptiness of the coming hours. How could he spend in this fierce, unfriendly city, the rest of the day? What could he do?

The hours passed. Charles dressed and went downstairs and pleased his friend, the French *maître d'hôtel*, by telling him what he thought of the hotel's cuisine. What he was really thinking of, though, was how he could best communicate with Alison. There was no mail for thirty-six hours. To cable would be too much. But perhaps a cable letter — Charles sent quickly for a cable form, and as he finished his coffee, thought out what he could usefully say: —

"May I not have your news am here for present please let me hear am naturally anxious is there anything I can do for you or Mrs. Phillips in New York."

"As if she has n't a hundred friends to whom she can appeal if she wants anything done over here!" Charles added to himself, as he signed his name "Caerleon, Knickerbocker Hotel." All the same, he was proud of his diplomacy in adding the "or Mrs. Phillips."

Alison would get the cable when she was called in the morning — for it was about midnight in Paris. He could hope for an answer during the next day — if only she cared to cable. But he felt that was unlikely. She had not been too kind. He had very little confidence.

Charles then did what he would have done in England: he went to the theatre. He could n't expect that it would occupy his mind, but it might help to pass a couple of hours. He chose a musical comedy. At least it would n't make too great a demand on his attention. Besides, he'd seen "The Belle of New York." That had taught London a lot. Perhaps all American plays of the kind were like it.

Charles soon found they were n't. And he could n't bring himself to like the energetic rubbish that he learned generally passed for musical comedy on Broadway. However, New York — he'd discovered already — did so many things better than they're done where Charles came from that it could afford Mr. George Edwardes his triumphs.

Coming out of the theatre, Charles heard and saw that there had been excitements on Wall Street. People were speaking of the stock market, and the bills of the papers were eloquent of something unusual. He would n't listen, and he averted his eyes. If there'd been an almighty slump, and if he'd lost all he'd made and all he'd bought — well, he'd learn it soon enough. He could n't do anything between now and breakfast, anyhow. If Mr. Capper had had to sell out his stock, he'd no doubt done so at some moment that meant no risk to himself, and that equally would mean that he'd have a few hundred dollars to hand back. They could n't have lost the exact five thousand pounds. He wondered whether he should have supper. He might look in at the Knickerbocker Hotel grill-room. His friend, the *maître d'hôtel*, had told him it was a sight after the

theatre. It certainly was. Charles approached it from the hall of the hotel. An attendant asked for his coat and hat. He would n't give them up, as he was n't sure he would n't go at once to his room after looking round the room. Room, do I call it? He could see it over the heads of the crowd that were clamouring for admission. It seemed the size of a football field. Indeed, one of the things that most astonished Charles, who had been used to the smaller publics of London, Paris, and Berlin, was the enormous number of people who throng the supper places of New York. There seemed to him a half-hundred places, each as big as any place he knew of in London or Paris, all of which became crammed as midnight approached, and each of which was not only as big, but far, far more gorgeous, more splendid, more ornate — even sometimes in better taste. But he was n't to get into the Knickerbocker grill-room. As he was stopping in the hotel, and as he was always in the habit of having the waiter-mind recognise his ascendancy, he pushed past the first guardians of the velvet rope that was stretched across the entrance. He had the impression that policemen were being employed to keep back the crush. Perhaps that was an exaggeration. But certainly the keeping back was on the strong-arm principle. Charles had a vague Paris memory of the *maître d'hôtel* who was the Peter of this heaven, and asked with customary politeness if he could have a table. The *maître d'hôtel* glared: "Can't you see the crowd? You've not booked a table. Anyhow, you can't go in with your coat and hat." Charles found himself pushed on one side. Poor Charles! Where was the amenity he'd been

used to? And the gibe at his coat and hat cut him to the quick. His hat, it was true, was on his head, because he was n't yet in the room, but his coat was on his arm.

The episode distracted his mind. He went, indignant, to bed.

CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH THE AMIABLE CHARLES REFUSES TO HAVE HIS BREAKFAST DISTURBED, AND ACCEPTS AN INVITATION TO DINNER

SLEEP well, and there is no trouble, no anxiety, no ecstasy of happiness or good fortune that will shake the nerves. Charles slept well. He had gone to bed so indignant with the whole American system that for the time he hardly remembered he had troubles of his own. But he dreamt, and he woke rather earlier than usual, and it was many minutes short of eight o'clock when, with a New York "American" in his hand, he sat down to breakfast.

Anxious curiosity tore at his vitals, but he would n't give way to it. He ate his stewed pears and cream just as if a great fortune was n't in the balance, and he read all the scandals and sensations of his newspaper's first page exactly as usual. Partly it was courage, nerve, but even more it was cowardice. He knew that if he turned the leaves he would find Mr. Thomas C. Shotwell explaining to the world the true inwardness of whatever had happened overnight in Wall Street. Michigan and Illinois had had a place in the headlines yesterday. To-day, surely, it would figure in letters an inch high. But *how?*

So Charles read on, and did n't really know what he read. And as he turned from page one to page two, as he saw with averted mind how "woman falls out of window

as auto kills small boy," and how "police hypnotised Anna B. Runyon defence contends," as he struggled with the latest news from Mr. Hammerstein and the adventures of Mutt and Jeff, he thought of all it would mean to him if the price of Michigan and Illinois had n't broken. He would be content even if it had remained at the figure it had reached when yesterday he left the offices of Capper, Zanthro and Company. Thirty thousand pounds, say. It was all very well for him to have said yesterday that, while as an argument with Mr. Gorham that sum might now be sufficient, yet as a provision for his future and Allison's it was really inadequate. He'd said that when he'd been excited. He was n't excited this morning. But perhaps it was fairy gold.

He felt at length that he could no longer postpone turning the page which would tell him his fate. He took a mouthful of tea, looked at his watch, glanced round the room, and took up the paper —

"Mr. Caerleon, Mr. Caerleon, Mr. Caerleon."

He was being "paged." Such a thing had n't happened to him before. It was rather odd to hear his name called out in these alien halls. The idea shot into his mind that to be called by one's name was altogether more happy than by the number of one's room. And yet there were hundreds and hundreds of people in the hotel. His room was one thousand and twenty-three. Another thing they do better in America!

"Here," called Charles to the bell-boy, who, seeing him, grinned all over his freckled face. "Aw, I need n't have called out your name if I'd known it was you — I

would n't forget *your* glass eye." A monocle has its compensations even in America, Charles thought. The little slip of paper handed him showed that he was wanted at the telephone.

"This is Mr. Capper speaking. Mr. Caerleon, I've rung you up so early because Mr. Marsh has been talking to me. He tells me that —"

Charles never thought so quickly in all his life. Everything of importance in connection with Mr. Capper passed through his mind: how he'd tried to dissuade him from buying Michigan and Illinois, and how again and again he'd tried to get him to sell out — while the stock was going down and as soon as it had started to go up. He felt certain that Mr. Capper was on the point of suggesting some course of action to him, and he felt equally certain that if he tried to decide it now he'd decide it to his own disadvantage. And he knew it would be no use to argue. No sooner had he learned who had called him than his brain began to work, and he was in time to stop the broker before he could hear what the no doubt capable Marsh had to say.

"Excuse me, Mr. Capper, I'm not ready for business yet. I'm only just up. We'll talk at a quarter to ten. I'll be at your office then. The Exchange does n't open till ten, does it? *Good*-bye!" and before Mr. Capper's expostulations could take shape he'd hung up the receiver.

"If anyone wants Mr. Caerleon on the telephone," he told the neat shirtwaist at the telephone desk, "please say he 's not to be found."

But this was all very well. He'd have to go back to

his breakfast and his paper. Presumably Mr. Capper had n't had to sell out his stock the previous day, or else he'd not have any reason to tell him Mr. Marsh's views of this morning. He was still in the soup, apparently. He went back, gripped his teeth, took up the paper, and turned to the stock market news.

"Who's buying Michigan and Illinois?" a headline asked; and then on another column, "Stock market stagnant, but M. and I. like a balloon. Bears seeking cover."

But what was the actual price when the Exchange closed? Charles had enough sense to look for that.

621,500 Michigan & I . . . . 62½ 28½ 62½+31¼.

It took Charles quite a time to dig out the import of the line, but after a time he realised what it meant to him. The first figures showed the amount of stock dealt in, the second the highest price during the day, the third the lowest, the fourth the closing price, and the fifth the rise since the previous day. It was evident, therefore, that he'd been lucky enough to begin his buying at the lowest — or almost at the lowest: at twenty-nine and five-eighths and at twenty-nine. And when the Exchange closed the price was sixty-two and a half!

Charles sat before the remains of his breakfast for several minutes. His mind was a blank — or it was a blank in that he was aware of no coherent thoughts. He'd laid the paper down and had tried for a moment to reckon out in his head what he'd made, but his brain refused to function. He tried with a pencil on the

table-cloth; the result was the same. It was then that he'd lapsed into blankness. . . .

Everything came back with a flash. He sat upright, folded the paper, and called for his check — we should call it a "bill" in England. Giving the waiter a tip of ten cents, and wondering whether it was enough, he went to a chair in the barber's shop. You ought to get a lot of attention for tenpence, he said to himself — and he certainly got it. We are only beginning to know what shaving is in Europe.

During this time he managed to avoid any detailed calculation of his position. His mind was clear enough now, but he didn't want to mix things up; he didn't want to make a mistake. But back in his room —it was still short of nine o'clock — he sat down at his writing-table and started figuring.

Mr. Capper had told him at a very much earlier stage of the game, and when his holding was only ninety-five thousand shares, that with every dollar advance he made nearly twenty thousand pounds. That was when the stock stood at forty-two. It was over sixty-one now. He supposed it possible that they had n't been able to buy him any more — not because he thought that likely, but because he wanted to discount his good fortune. Even so, nineteen times twenty thousand was three hundred and eighty thousand pounds. And Mr. Capper had estimated he'd made about thirty thousand before that last calculation came into operation. Good Heavens! He'd made four hundred thousand pounds at the very least — and much more, very likely. He was a millionaire — in dollars — more than once!

But was he? Anything might have happened overnight. Charles was pretty innocent of stock markets, but he did know that London business often ruled the prices (by grace of New York, of course!). While he'd slept, London had been buying or selling. And oh! what was it Mr. Marsh had said? Why had n't he listened? When directly the Exchange opened, perhaps Michigan and Illinois would be several points lower; perhaps the whole thing was a temporary rally, a spurt. Feverishly he searched for support for this view in his paper. Mr. Shotwell did n't believe the advance was exhausted. All the indications were the other way, in fact.

Charles hurried on his overcoat, and started for Wall Street. But he was not to go farther than the head of the elevator shaft without interruption. Just as he was pressing the bell a letter was shot pneumatically into the hands of the floor-clerk — "Oh, Mr. Caerleon, here's something for you."

It was a note from Mr. Davison: —

My dear Mr. Caerleon, — You were to come and dine with us one night. Mrs. Davison suggests this evening. It will give us great pleasure if you will. The hour is eight o'clock. If this note finds you in the hotel, perhaps you can let me have a reply by the bearer.

Yours very truly,

Hepburn Z. Davison.

"That's odd," Charles thought. "Mr. Davison did n't like me. What's he in such a hurry to ask me to dinner for?" Charles did n't know it, but as a matter of fact

the reason was very simple. Mr. Davison had met Mr. Capper overnight, and Mr. Capper had n't confined himself to thanking his friend for the introduction of a new client: bubbling over with excitement at the events of the day, he had been indiscreet enough to tell him, in confidence, about Charles's extraordinary methods and commissions, and of his success. It occurred at once to Mr. Davison that the man who was at least half responsible for the flurry on 'Change, and who seemed to be on the way to making, at least temporarily, a fortune, even though by a compound of sheer good luck and ignorance, was worth cultivating. Besides, as Mrs. Davison remarked, he was a brother of Lord Bude's.

Anyhow, Charles accepted. There was n't any reason why he should n't. He had n't disliked Mr. Davison, and it was certain that when the evening came he would be searching about for some means of killing time.

CHAPTER XIII

IN WHICH THE AMIABLE CHARLES RECEIVES A CABLE AND CELEBRATES A FICTITIOUS BIRTHDAY BY TAKING MR. CAPPER TO THE WALDORF

CHARLES arrived very punctually at Mr. Capper's office. He found that gentleman by no means as cool and collected as he had been at the moment of their first interview. It really was a fact that his firm did n't care very much for the more speculative kind of business. They preferred, encouraged, and knew more about investment accounts. Mr. Capper therefore found himself in a sea of whose navigation, while not ignorant, he was timorous. He greeted Charles with a sort of veiled resentment. He 'd not been insensible of, indeed he 'd admired, the Englishman's courage and nerve, but he knew very well that it was more good luck than courage, or nerve, or skill that had put him so much on the right side of the market. His client certainly was n't acting in conjunction with the interests who 'd started bulling M. and I. He doubted even if he were being used as a cat's paw. He was obviously as innocent as he could be — a tenderfoot. He did n't even know who the other bulls were. No, Mr. Capper had made a pretty shrewd guess. He was sure that Charles was simply acting blindly on a tip. It might have reached him by chance, or through some breach of confidence — but whatever the means, he 'd had the nerve to go nap on

it. He was a sport, anyway. And he'd got Capper, Zanthro and Company into the business, and there the senior partner supposed they'd have to stop until he could either induce him to close his trade, or until matters were settled automatically by the sudden dropping of prices. Such things had happened. It did n't look as if they were going to happen here, though. And then again, even if Charles did decide to take his profit and to clear out, what a job it'd be selling such a deuce of a block without breaking the market. Two hundred and ninety-five thousand would want some selling. Unless the men who had been buying so eagerly yesterday were going on picking up everything that was offered, he did n't see how it was to be done. . . .

"Good morning again, Mr. Caerleon. You seemed in a hurry this morning. I hope I did n't spoil your breakfast. But I did think I ought to have your views about this stock of yours."

"To tell the truth, I had n't got any views, Mr. Capper. I had n't looked at the paper when you telephoned. I'd only just come down to breakfast; and I feared that if I talked then, my ignorance of what had happened would likely drive me into some stupid decision."

"You did n't know what happened overnight! I don't understand."

"I mean I knew no more of what had happened to Michigan and Illinois than when I left you here after lunch."

"Good Lord! Do you mean to tell me that you went away with, so to speak, a hundred thousand shares in your pocket, all bought on margin with your day's

profits, and did n't even take the trouble to find out how things had gone when the Exchange closed?"

"Yes, I do. Stupid, is n't it? But let's make up for lost time now. Have you bought me all the shares I wanted?"

"Yes, Mr. Marsh bought the last lot offered last night. Mr. Murphy is figuring out the account now. It's pretty complicated. We had to buy your shares in all sorts of lots, just as we could. However, I daresay you'll be able to make it out."

"What were you going to tell me this morning when I so impatiently finished the conversation?"

Mr. Capper smiled a little sourly. "I was going to tell you that as the market was still — as far as M. and I. goes, I mean — so very bullish, I thought it would be a good time for you to start selling. It was clear from what Marsh said he'd be able to get rid of quite a lot of your shares right away, and it might prove to be a good thing to have done. One never knows which way the cat will jump."

"Yes, but what's the feeling? And what about London? On the face of it, is the stock better now than it was last night?"

"Oh, yes, a lot: there was a great deal of buying in London, and there are, I know, a lot of European and Western orders this morning. Certainly it's gone up. But we can't be sure if it'll last till the Exchange opens. And when it does, shall we sell a little of your holding as a start?"

"No, not to begin with, anyhow. You say I've got the whole two hundred and ninety-five thousand. I'll

just look at your pictures here if you'll let me, until the prices begin to come through — and then we'll see."

Mr. Capper subsided. "Very well; do as you please, but there is such a thing as overstaying your market, Mr. Caerleon. Don't forget that."

So Charles devoted his attention — or pretended to — to the study of the indifferent coverings of Mr. Capper's walls, and Mr. Capper read letters, and made little notes on their corners, and was very restless and unhappy. He'd already given Mr. Murphy instructions to bring him the first Michigan and Illinois price that came up on the tape, and he knew that he'd get a telephone report from the floor of the Exchange directly things began to shape themselves there.

The three or four minutes before Mr. Murphy appeared seemed to Charles an eternity. He looked at all the pictures on one wall, and then began looking at them all again, as if they were too good to pass over rapidly. He was n't thinking of impressing Mr. Capper. He was thinking of passing the time. Even the simulation of interest did that. He'd examine a picture and then walk back and look at it critically in the large; then he'd start examining it in detail as if with a magnifying glass — but he could n't even have told what it pretended to be. . . .

The door opened.

"M. and I. has opened at sixty-five."

Mr. Capper leaned back in his chair and stretched himself. Charles took out his eyeglass and began to polish it with his handkerchief. The movements of both men were dictated by their nerves.

"What does that mean to me, Mr. Capper — approximately, of course?"

"It means, my dear sir, that you're making a great deal of money as fast as ever you can make it. The last block of shares that Marsh bought for you last night was at sixty-two and a half. If you assume that all you've bought cost that figure — and of course we know that they've cost you all sorts of prices, from twenty-nine and a half up — then you've made — oh! I don't know what you've made. But with a jump of three and a half since last night, you've obviously made — since then, and on paper, you understand, for Heaven only knows what'll happen when you start selling all your shares! — over a million dollars — about a couple of hundred thousand pounds."

Charles had to light a cigarette. He realised that Mr. Capper did n't like his smoking, but he could n't help that. It was a relief to his nerves. He'd added the two hundred thousand pounds to the sum he'd arrived at in his bedroom that morning.

"It really looks as if there is n't going to be a break just now, anyhow; does n't it, Mr. Capper?"

"Yes, it does." Mr. Capper was laconic.

"Well, you say that Mr. Murphy is making up my account — a list of my purchases, I suppose. It'll be ready in an hour or so, I hope. I don't think it's good for my nerves to stop here, and, anyhow, I'm interrupting business —"

"Not at all; stop here as long as you like," Mr. Capper broke in. "I'd very much rather you were here, as a matter of fact."

"No, I guess I'd better go and look at something. You see, if I stopped I might be tempted to buy some more — and I don't believe you'd approve of that. I'll go along now, and I'll be back before twelve, and then we'll really decide — if you'll be good enough to help me — what I'd better do."

It was certainly better to go out and to look at New York than to stop in Mr. Capper's rather stuffy room and to continue the nerve-racking business of waiting Mr. Murphy's announcements. Charles felt that a whole morning of that kind of excitement would finish him entirely. It was not only that he felt the excitement, but there was also the necessity of hiding that he felt it. To make dollars at each tick of the clock was all very well in theory, but when it was complicated by the additional fact that at any moment the skein of money that was being wound so quickly might begin to unwind with even greater velocity, it became altogether too wearing. All the same, to spend a couple of hours looking at a place in which for the moment you take no interest, having a great, an absorbing, interest elsewhere, is not easy. So Charles found. And it was n't till the first hour was over that it occurred to him that it was at least possible that there might be a cable from Paris at his hotel. He had looked for one in the morning both before breakfast and before coming out, and, not finding it, had come unhappily to the conclusion that the only news he was likely to get would arrive by post. Some day — next week, perhaps. However, he'd go now and see.

There was a cable. It could only be from Alison or

her father. No one else knew his address. So he reflected as he tore it open. It was not short, anyhow.

"Father with me again very ill he wishes very much to see you it is asking great deal but if you are not settled should be infinitely grateful if you could come tell no one of illness. A."

Charles had read the cable as he walked to his room. It took him no moment to make up his mind and to plan his course of action. He summoned a valet by telephone. "Pack all my things, please; perhaps I shall be leaving to-night." Then, hurrying to the hall, he examined the board which announces the departures of the European boats. It was eleven o'clock on a Thursday; a French boat had gone early that morning, and there was nothing else till Saturday — a slow English and a fast German boat: both would leave at midday. Satisfying himself that there was no supplement to this information, he countermanded the packing and hurried downtown to the office of the German line. Yes, their boat went Saturday. Under normal conditions it would land him in Paris very late on Friday. And he could be given a single room. Not that the quality of accommodation mattered. Charles would have gone steerage or as a stoker rather than be left behind. He tried to express this zeal in answering Allison's request in the cable he now sent, but it was n't possible to say very much without saying too much.

"Cable received after to-day's boat had gone shall come by next Prinzessin Mathilde Saturday arrive Paris

about midnight to-morrow week will telegraph hour from Cherbourg. CHARLES CAERLEON."

Concern for Mr. Gorham's health was swallowed up in Charles's mind with delight that he was to see Alison in a little over seven days, and in satisfaction at all the implications of her father's wish for his presence.

Charles remembered now his business duties. For the last hour he'd entirely forgotten Michigan and Illinois, Mr. Capper, and all the problems connected with his newly acquired interests. They'd be more difficult than ever now that in forty-eight hours he'd be showing his heels to New York. He wondered whether he could extricate himself in that space of time from the complications which Mr. Capper had foreshadowed. He'd require all the broker's good nature, and unhappily he found that he'd begun this last stage by irritating him by arriving not "before twelve" as he'd promised, but several minutes after. Michigan and Illinois was still soaring, but Mr. Capper was peevish. The attention that he'd had to give to Charles's commissions was taking him away from his other interests. He ought, he remembered, to have cabled to London yesterday about a Turner which one of his correspondents had just unearthed. Very likely now it would be too late. So he answered Charles's greeting and his inquiry as to how things stood with an unhappy blankness of expression:—

"Your stock 's still going up, Mr. Caerleon."

"Hurrah!" Charles answered: he felt a little like a schoolboy; "let 's get to business, then. Send out and sell the odd forty-five thousand as quick as ever you can, and

after that's done we'll talk. It'll be easier when we've only got the round figure to bother about, won't it?"

Mr. Murphy appeared and was told of Charles's wishes. "The sale of a big block like that's sure to affect the market," was his comment; "however, we'll let 'em go in lots."

"Your beautiful clock there, Mr. Capper — a museum piece, surely — says it's twenty-five to one. It's time for lunch. I wish you'd do something for me. It's my birthday to-day. I've just remembered. You're about the only man I know in New York. Come and have lunch with me. It'll celebrate my coming of age and also the way in which your Michigan and Illinois has responded to an appeal from the old country. Now, now, please don't say 'no.' I'll tell you a secret. It's about the only chance you'll have. I'm going the day after to-morrow — no, not West, but back to Europe. You see, I only came over to buy Michigan and Illinois and to see your skyscrapers — and to avoid coming-of-age celebrations in England. I've heard lots about your Waldorf Hotel. Let's get a taxi and go up there. We can be back in an hour and a half. And when we get back we can sell all my other stock if the market has n't gone to blazes. Anyhow, we'll have to sell; I want to take the swag away on Saturday."

Mr. Capper gasped, and would have protested, but Charles, who incidentally, I should mention, had not drunk a cocktail or anything else of an alcoholic nature since dinner on the previous evening, anticipated his movements by handing him his hat and overcoat. "I've only got forty-seven hours," he added; "I can't spend

a couple of them better than in finding out what terrapin's like."

"Oh, if it's terrapin you want," Mr. Capper said, "we 'd better telephone to them to have it ready"; and as he was n't going to let his office know of his sudden midday excursion into the extra-business world, he rang up at once, ordered a table in half an hour for Mr. Osgood Capper, and said that the terrapin was to be prepared in some special manner which Charles did n't catch.

"I 'm so glad you can come," Charles said. "I've remembered my birthday just in time; the terrapin 'll be on the table at about the exact minute, allowing for difference of time, that my old nurse told me I made my first appearance in the world. So it 'll be a regular beanfeast."

As mad as a hatter, Mr. Capper thought. But the fact that Charles, in spite of a certain assuredness of manner and maturity of expression, was only just twenty-one, explained a great deal. It was a good thing that he had n't started their acquaintance by telling the broker he was under age. If he had, Mr. Capper would certainly have refused to deal for him.

CHAPTER XIV

BEGINS WITH A RETURN TO WALL STREET, AND ENDS IN THE DAVISON HOUSEHOLD

A COMING-OF-AGE birthday has to be celebrated with all kinds of rites. Both Mr. Capper and Charles were the better for their lunch, and very much more cheerful when they got back to Wall Street. Mr. Murphy had a very good report to give. The sale of the forty-three thousand had n't had any evil effect. They 'd been snapped up quickly enough by brokers who looked as if they 'd be glad of more. No, of course they 'd employed another firm to do the selling. After buying so much yesterday it would n't do for them to be the first to start on the other tack. The price was still going up — more slowly, naturally.

Charles had refused to talk business over lunch. They 'd talked American politics and the state of the picture market, and he 'd told Mr. Capper why he thought he ought now to go to London and to buy Steers and Sickerts, Rothensteins, Johns and Epsteins, rather than continue in his present path. Mr. Capper had been brought to agreement and had promised to come and stop with Charles in the spring, and to study under his direction these new movements with which at present he was n't entirely in sympathy. The phrases are his. But now, with Mr. Murphy waiting for further in-

structions, it was n't any longer possible to evade the necessity of planning out a campaign.

"Supposing you tell Mr. Murphy to sell another thirty thousand as discreetly as he can, but as quickly, and then to come back and report," Charles suggested. "We'll have settled things by then, I expect."

Mr. Capper agreed, and Mr. Murphy went off.

Charles could n't quite see what there was to talk about. He explained to Mr. Capper he'd just got to go Saturday, and that he'd like to have all his stock sold in time for him to take back with him a cheque for his profit. Was that possible? Mr. Capper said it was possible enough, but that it would want a lot of doing. The influence of 1904 Pol Roger had helped to alter his views. He was really rather sorry now that his client was selling out. He'd like to have seen him stop in the market until he'd made a sum which would cause his present generous winnings to seem a mere modest pittance. It was possible. Some one was trying to get control of Michigan and Illinois, and the stock might go to anything. There might be a repetition of the Northern Securities scramble. Besides, he was beginning to like Charles. He was sorry he was going back so soon. Still, he would no doubt be as stubborn in his determination to sell as he had been in his orders to buy. It was only a question of how much stock the market could absorb without the price going down. They talked round and round the subject.

There was n't much immediate fear about the market, apparently. Mr. Murphy came back earlier than was expected to say that the thirty thousand were gone,

and that although naturally the rise was much less rapid, it was still continuing. He did n't see why they should n't sell another fifty thousand before the Exchange closed.

"You 'll have to do better than that. Get some more help. You 've got to try to get rid of another hundred thousand."

But Mr. Murphy was gone. And it 'll save time if I say at once that when the Exchange closed that evening Charles had only a hundred and twenty thousand left of his holding, and it was understood that the energetic Mr. Marsh was to get rid of as many of these as possible directly the Exchange opened the next morning.

Mr. Capper's last words to Charles were that he hoped with luck to have cleaned up the whole transaction before midday to-morrow — and if that was n't possible, at least by two o'clock. "I 'll have my car down here then, anyhow, and if things have gone as I hope they will, I 'll take you for a couple of hours' joy ride. There are a lot of things that you ought to see before you leave New York. I 'll show you Central Park and General Grant's tomb anyway."

Charles left Wall Street without any idea of his position, even his approximate position, with regard to the stock he 'd bought or sold. He did know that if the rest of his stock, the last hundred and twenty thousand, was sold as easily as what had gone during the day, he 'd come out an enormous winner; but he 'd long ago given up the attempt to calculate transaction by transaction where he stood. He did n't as a matter of fact know at

what prices most of his stock had been bought, and all he knew of the prices at which it had since been sold was that Mr. Capper and Mr. Murphy had considered them satisfactory, and that, as Michigan and Illinois was still going up, it was certain that he could n't be worse off than his rapid paper calculations of the morning had indicated. He'd be able to go back to Paris with the knowledge that Mr. Gorham could no longer say to him that he had n't enough even to keep up Alison's cars. Why, he could even undertake to pay those dressmakers' bills which had formed part of the dark horizon of her father's conversation.

However, the size of the fortune he was making did n't affect very greatly Charles's thoughts. They were in Paris, or on the steamer that was to take him there. Even though Mr. Gorham were very ill, he'd be able to hear his visitor's decision not to wait another day without telling Alison all he was carrying in his heart. Charles had promised to wait a year, but surely his new fortune, added to Mr. Gorham's reverses, made reason enough for his claiming to have his promise handed back to him.

It was exactly eight o'clock when Charles arrived at Mr. Davison's house in Seventy-ninth Street. He found himself the first.

"Dinner's at quarter-past eight," his host said, "but I asked you to come early that we might have a few minutes to talk. I have n't been idle in your affair: I've been inquiring about work for you, and I think I can get you a start. However, I won't say anything more

about that for a day or two, when I shall know for certain."

It was at this point that Charles ought, of course, to have disclosed the fact that he would be gone in less than two days. He did n't refrain from any design. He'd seize a later opportunity of telling his host.

Mr. Davison, like so many business men in America and in England, was a very different person in his office, where his attitude was that of a man whom everyone would if possible take advantage of, and in his house, where he could dispense lordly hospitality, and where, in fact, he was really happy if his guests were pleased and amused. He was telling Charles about his fellow guests. It was quite a large party. What he was told did n't hold Charles's attention very much until he heard a familiar name: "And then there's a man whom I daresay you've heard of in England. He's always in the papers. And he's a friend of Mr. Gorham's, too, — Mr. Pyle. I must remember to tell him you're here with a letter from Gorham. He's got a very ferocious reputation in Wall Street. 'Old Man Pyle,' they call him, but he's young enough when it comes to work."

At this point Mrs. Davison appeared, very gentle, very beautiful, like a fine piece of old lace. She had had no children, and she knew more about Mr. Davison's business than he knew himself. She did everything by calculation, but her greatest success was that nobody suspected it except her husband. She made Charles at home at once; she made him feel that she was sincerely glad to entertain him. As indeed she was. She told him whom he was to take in to dinner and who would sit on

his other side; she told him that she'd ordered certain American dishes specially for him. She insisted on his drinking a cocktail of which she said only her own coloured butler had the recipe — and then she left him to welcome other guests, and hardly spoke to him again all the evening.

CHAPTER XV

"OLD MAN PYLE"

IT was Dostoievsky who remarked that, as a general rule, people, even the wicked, are much more naïve and simple-hearted than we suppose. And we ourselves are so, too, he goes on to say. It is the second half of the Russian's thought that is most worth pondering, but it was of the first that Charles was reminded as he looked at "Old Man Pyle," who had taken a seat almost opposite to him at the table before he had succeeded in identifying him. An old gentleman, slightly prognathous, clean-shaven, soft-eyed, white-haired, with exquisite hands, of which evidently he took such care that they looked years younger than his face. Such a man would n't be a church-warden in England. But why "Old Man" Pyle? And why the ferocious reputation? Charles knew he did ferocious things. Kidnapping was n't a gentle business. But he did n't look ferocious.

Mr. Davison, glancing round the table, saw Charles's inspection of Mr. Pyle. "Oh, Pyle, I want you to know Mr. Caerleon. He only arrived from England yesterday. He's a friend of Gorham's — in fact, I owe it to Gorham that he's here — so you ought to know one another."

The old man laid down his soup spoon and looked benevolently at Charles. "I am always glad to meet

any friend of Mr. Gorham's," he said with a pleasant smile. Charles looked for, but could n't discern, the slightest sign of embarrassment. Mr. Pyle continued: "And I hope we may see something of one another. When did you last see my old friend Cyrus? I hope he was well."

Charles thought he'd test the old gentleman's complacency. "Oh, I was with him in Paris a fortnight ago — he was very well, I think, when I saw him last."

"In Paris! I knew he was in Europe. I've a good mind to run over to Europe for a fortnight myself. Cyrus and I could have a high old time together"; and Mr. Pyle turned to the lady on the right. He had n't moved a hair; nor his mouth nor his eyes had quivered. Perhaps, after all, Mr. Gorham was wrong, and "Old Man Pyle" was innocent of his kidnapping. It had only been a surmise. But no doubt he did n't have that ferocious reputation for nothing.

From both of his neighbours Charles received invitations before they rose from dinner — not the cold and polite invitations that one gets in England, but invitations that show that one's hosts are prepared to take trouble. First they found out what he was interested in and then they undertook to show it to him. As he had n't told Mr. Davison that he was leaving for Europe, he hesitated to excuse himself on that ground. But he had to. "I shall send round to Mrs. Havemeyer's house to-morrow morning and get permission for you to see her pictures," the lady he had taken in told him. "If our Metropolitan Museum Manets have disap-

pointed you, you ought to see those she has as quickly as possible. And you'll be going to Boston, of course. I'll see that Mrs. Jack Gardner asks you to see her things."

"Ah, I shall have to come back to New York to avail myself of all your kindness and hospitality," Charles said, "for I'm sailing on Saturday. No, I had n't expected to, but I had a cable to-day that makes it impossible for me to stop."

"Then I'm afraid you won't see Boston this trip. But there's no reason why, if you can spare the time, you should n't see the Havemeyer collection to-morrow. What are you doing at lunch? Are you engaged?" She also was genuinely interested in pictures, and she was anxious that her new acquaintance should take back with him some knowledge of what America had to show.

Charles explained that he might not be free, that business had the first claim on his time.

"Oh, that's all right: we American women are used to that. I'll expect you at half-past eleven if you don't telephone. We can see the pictures before lunch, and you can get away before two. Henry'll come, too, won't you, Henry?" and she called to her husband, who was doing his social duty further down the table. "Mr. Caerleon is coming to see the Havemeyer pictures with me to-morrow. You'll come along, won't you?" Henry said he would.

"It 's a good thing for him to leave his old work every now and then," the lady added.

Charles's other neighbour, as she could n't do any-

thing towards showing him America, fell back on another device for helping the stranger. "If you must go Saturday, you must, I suppose. What boat?"

Charles told her.

"Prinzessin Mathilde. That's the Bremen-New York line, is n't it? I thought so? My brother 's one of the American directors of it — or something of the kind. I shall write and tell him you're sailing, and he'll see you're made comfortable. Perhaps they'll give you the bridal suite! Anyhow, he'll be so glad if he can be of use. And you must come and see us when you come back."

Charles asked her if she knew the Gorhams.

"Of Philadelphia? Oh, yes — very well. Or rather, I know Alison Gorham very well: her father's like all American men, too busy to catch more than a glimpse of. But Alison's the nicest girl I know — and one of the prettiest."

Charles was happy now. Neither Manet nor the prospects of his having a good voyage could drag him away from the subject of Miss Gorham's qualities. Poor young man! he gave himself away completely.

When the women had left the table, Mr. Pyle came round and sat down next to Charles. He wanted to know more about his old friend. And his daughter? How was she? He is either a consummate old fox, Charles thought, or else he is very much misjudged. Obviously, if Charles had been with Mr. Gorham in Paris a fortnight ago, he must almost certainly be aware of his disappearance; and yet Mr. Pyle was ambling happily along with his conversation as if nothing of the kind had

ever occurred to his friend. Charles thought he'd have another shot at destroying his equanimity.

"I met another man in Paris I think you know — Gilder was his name."

Mr. Pyle smiled. "Oh, Gilder — Tim Gilder? So he's in Paris too. Yes, I know him well — too well, I think sometimes. He's nobody's enemy — I need n't finish the tag. He's almost in my office — of it, but not in it. If I knew you better, I'd ask — but it would n't be fair. I hope he's enjoying himself, poor fellow . . . ?"

"You can't tell if a man's enjoying himself, but he certainly was n't being dull on the evening I saw him — I can answer for that."

"Perhaps that's what 's the matter with Gilder. He's too busy. He can't leave things alone. He'd do business at his father's funeral, and he would n't be in Paris more than a couple of hours before he'd got something humming."

"So I should suppose —" Charles was interrupted by his host's movement. He was glad enough to get away from Mr. Pyle. He felt he was unevenly matched, handicapped. His antagonist was too experienced.

Later in the evening the buccaneer came his way again.

"Mr. Caerleon, if you're going to be in New York, come and see me. I'm a bachelor, but I can show you a few things. Any friend of Gorham's is a friend of mine. I'd like you to come and spend a day or two — a week-end, perhaps — in my country place."

Charles excused himself, explaining that he'd been called back to Europe by the illness of a relation —

nearly enough true: Mr. Gorham was to be a relation, surely. And as he looked at Mr. Pyle he congratulated himself that no one was likely to have told him that, in addition to having been mixed up in the futile protection of Mr. Gorham in Paris, he'd got mixed up in Michigan and Illinois, that he was interfering with the Pyle plans. He was quite sure now in his own mind that the old gentleman had dictated the Gorham kidnapping. He'd felt it in his bones ever since he'd broached the name of Gilder. And he was equally sure that, if it were known that he had butted into the Michigan and Illinois gamble, he'd be made to suffer for it. It was lucky for Charles that Mr. Capper's indiscretion had gone no further than Mr. Davison, who had told his old friend that the Englishman was a friend of Gorham's, but had kept locked up in his own breast the one act that was really answerable for his presence there that night. And for once Mr. Pyle's aids had failed him. He rather prided himself on his intelligence system. But Charles's buying of Michigan and Illinois had synchronised so exactly with that of the brokers who were buying for the Pyle faction, that, kept in the dark as they always were, they had leapt to the conclusion that the Capper men were playing the same game in the same interests. The amount of stock that had been bought in the day ought to have told Mr. Pyle; but for once he'd been careless. He had n't compared the total of shares dealt in with his brokers' returns. With Gorham out of action, why should he fear any opposition? All the shares would be his. It was only a question of how long it would take him to get them and the exact price he'd

have to pay. For a day or two at least he and his associates would have the market to themselves. And we know that Charles was already getting out of it — so Mr. Pyle was n't so very wrong.

Charles walked away from the Davison house, marvelling.

CHAPTER XVI

IN WHICH THE AMIABLE CHARLES SEARCHES FOR THE LITTLE BLUE TURBAN

CHARLES woke, turned on his pillow, said to himself that to-morrow would be Saturday and that he'd be on the sea, and telephoned for a paper to be sent up to his room. Michigan and Illinois was still the feature, and it was still going ahead. That he'd made a fortune, and not a small one, was no longer in question. But he'd have to hustle. The Capper firm had to sell the rest of his shares; he had to see the Havemeyer pictures; he had to uphold the honour and dignity of his country at lunch; he had to go for a "joy ride" — whatever that might mean — with Mr. Capper; and he had to make sure of closing his account and getting a cheque. It'd be a busy day.

He found Mr. Capper optimistic, and told him he'd met "Old Man Pyle" at dinner. "That's all right," he was told, "as long as he did n't know you were long of M. and I. But anyhow, you're almost out. Wait till one o'clock, and you will be altogether out if the market opens as it closed. You'll know then how you stand. And we'll have our ride. I've told the car to come at quarter-past two."

That day Charles did everything that he'd set out in the hope of doing, save one thing, and that the most important. He had the satisfaction of hearing that all his

holdings of Michigan and Illinois had passed into other hands; he'd seen, and had been amazed at the pictures; he'd lunched with the uxorious Henry and his amiable wife; he learnt what a "joy ride" meant, and he'd seen squirrels in Central Park; he'd closed his account with Messrs. Capper, Zanthro and Company — but he had not succeeded in lifting a cheque. That was reserved for to-morrow. Mr. Capper assured him there would be time and to spare. And, indeed, learning at length what profit he had made, Charles was not surprised that it was not a mere question of putting a signature to a piece of paper. In the first place, the amount, when translated into English currency, was one million three hundred and forty-three thousand pounds seventeen shillings and fourpence, and in the second, Charles, even before he knew and had been numbed by the extent of his fortune, had asked Mr. Capper if he might have it in a banker's cheque on London.

"Certainly," Mr. Capper had replied; "a Morgan cheque'll be good enough for you, I daresay. Your boat goes at midday. Come here at ten; we'll go round and get the cheque, and I'll take you across to the boat." Mr. Capper was genuinely sorry at Charles's departure, but he was cheerful. A really big gamble had been carried through, his client had got away with it, and his own profit in the way of commissions was not inconsiderable. And perhaps the best of it was that, large as Charles's profit was, no one seemed to have tumbled to the inwardness of his transactions. Mr. Capper's own office staff had been trained in discretion, and while Mr. Davison had been told of the beginnings of the affair, he'd

been warned not to let it go any further. As we know, he had n't said anything to Mr. Pyle. If Mr. Capper had one regret, it was that Charles had n't carried the affair further. It appeared that he could have done so with success. Michigan and Illinois, in spite of all his unloading, was still crescent. Mr. Capper smiled grimly when he thought what a hole he could have made in the pool's profits if he'd had Charles's information — whatever it was — had believed in it equally, and had had his nerve. Then he'd have been able to buy Rembrandts and Velasquez. He'd have been able to hold his own in any market.

And now Charles nerved himself to do something that he ought to have done before. Again and again he'd thought of his little French acquaintance at the Frontenac, and again and again he'd dismissed the thought. What was he to do? What could he do? To retrieve the past was impossible. So he had said to himself on the morrow of the evening he had spent with her. He wanted to help her; he would do all that he could to pluck her from the burning. But how?

Three days ago he had seen her — for the second time in his life; and she had appealed strangely to him. He remembered how for many nights after his first meeting with her at the Abbaye, and although he had never thought of her in his waking hours, that little yellow head, crowned with a blue turban, had come into his dreams. Her tenderness on the night he had dined with her, her care for him, her eyes misty with the dreams which she did not need to confess, her little motion of sympathy and affection when she had covered his hand

with her own — all came back to him. And he had put off looking for her again; and now to-day, because she had liked him, because he had befriended her, he was a millionaire. How much more difficult did this make his duty! True, he had listened to her, had even left her, with no kind of intention of taking the tip she had given him. Nor would he have done so if the next day at breakfast he had not chanced to read that the stock she had recommended had become the feature of the market.

Charles argued with himself. How much in thanks did he owe her? In very fact, to what extent was he her debtor? It was a problem that would want a colder brain than his to answer. Knowing not at all what he would say to her, what thanks he should render, but knowing too that he must go to her and that he must thank her, and that he must find some way to help her, he left Wall Street and walked, thinking rather of the girl he was going to see than of the fortune he had made, up and across town to Washington Square and the Hôtel Frontenac.

Idiot! The word was Charles's, and it was addressed to himself. Here he was on the very steps of the hotel, and it came to his mind in a flash that he had no idea for whom to ask. Neither in Paris, nor three nights ago here in New York, had he thought to ask her name, had he indeed cared to ask for it. What, he had thought — if he had thought at all — would it matter? Only by chance would he ever see her again. However, in French hotels they are used to such dilemmas, and when Charles, going through into the restaurant, found the *maître d'hôtel*

who had waited on him, dropped a two-dollar bill into his palm and asked vaguely if the lady with whom he had dined three nights previously had been lunching, he was answered as if his question were of the most ordinary and matter-of-fact kind.

"Ah, Madame Finot. No, monsieur, Madame Finot left for Europe yesterday in the Provence."

Charles felt more than disappointment. "Are you quite sure?" Perhaps, he thought, she might have gone West to join her friend in Chicago.

"Quite sure, monsieur: I waited always myself on Madame, and she bade me good-bye."

There was little else to be said. Charles went to the bureau. "Madame Finot left an address for her mail? If I give you a letter for her, will it be forwarded?"

"No, monsieur, we have no address for the mail, either of Monsieur or Madame Finot. Monsieur Finot did not live here all the time, and he had no mail here. I did ask," the clerk added, "for an address, but I was told that nothing would come." He knew his world.

Charles went away. How could he find her? He could n't send a wireless to the ship. No doubt Monsieur Finot was with her, and the arrival of a marconigram might have unhappy consequences. His heart ached. "Poor handful of bright spring-water" — whose very name he did n't know. He might search and search the world which held such figures, and, without a clearer description than he could give, he might search in vain. Fate had decided this parting, and fate might keep them apart. He could look for her in Paris, at Monte Carlo

or Nice or Vienna. Some day he would meet her again, perhaps. . . .

That night, his last in New York, Charles had no heart for amusement, for distraction. His nerves were a-jangle. His very certainty of fortune, and of Alison, was insufficient to cheer his spirit. Perhaps he was worn out.

CHAPTER XVII

IN WHICH A MANET IS BOUGHT, MR. CAPPER IS PLEASED AND DISAPPOINTED, AND MR. CARLINE GETS CHARLES'S PRIVILEGES

THE next morning as he breakfasted Charles was called again to the telephone. It was the lady who had so generously taken the comfort of his voyage on her shoulders. Unfortunately her brother could n't come down to the dock: he'd had to go out of town over the week-end, but Charles was, he'd told her, not to worry at all. He'd find everything fixed up on board. He could just go to his stateroom and not bother. Her brother had assured her he should have all the comfort the ship could afford: he was to have a better room, and his chair on deck and his place at table were being reserved. "Where'd you find an Englishwoman who'd take all that trouble for a comparative stranger?" Charles asked himself as he thanked her. The quality, and the quantity, and the generosity of American hospitality again amazed him.

He was with Mr. Capper at the exact moment that had been arranged, and Mr. Capper was ready for him. "Don't take off your coat; we'll go round at once"; and they stepped across the street and walked up half a block. Charles found himself entering the house of Morgan and Company, and in exchange for certain documents a very antique but no doubt very capable

gentleman handed him a cheque for the enormous figure that he'd anticipated — a cheque which he had, being still a business man, the forethought to have crossed and marked "Messrs. Coutts and Company, Payee's a/c." Curious, he thought, but this place where the American Republic is managed — more or less — is rather more old-fashioned than a London private bank.

"Can't I see Mr. Morgan?" he asked Mr. Capper as they left the counter.

"No, you can't," Mr. Capper replied. "You don't see Mr. Morgan by asking."

"Oh, don't you?" Charles replied. "I thought all your business men were so accessible, and that all you had to do was to walk right in."

Mr. Capper could only reply that it was n't so at the corner of Wall and Broad.

"Another illusion gone"; and Charles looked at his watch. It was n't half-past ten. His things were to meet him at the boat. He had nothing to do.

"Now, Mr. Capper, I'm going to complete my good work. I want you to have a good painting —"

"What!" Mr. Capper thought he'd not heard aright.

"I want you to have a good painting — no, that's a joke: I'm pulling your leg. I mean, I want you to have a good painting to remember me by. We've got time. You're coming uptown with me and we're going to Durand-Ruel's, and if they've got anything that I think'll do you good and help you on the right path, I'm going to give it you with a nice inscription — 'from a grateful client,' or something of that kind."

Mr. Capper flushed with pleasure. I've said before that he had got to like his eccentric client.

The dealer had many pictures which Charles would have liked for himself, but, watching Mr. Capper out of the corner of his eye, he could see that very few of them would have been welcomed in that gentleman's collection. Nor had Mr. Capper any idea of their commercial value. He thought they were worth a few hundred dollars apiece. He distinguished not at all between Monet and Sisley, Cezanne and Maufra. "French Impressionists," all of them; "they evade all problems of drawing," he wanted to say. It was a phrase he'd picked up. He thought it had the sanction of Sir William Richmond. And Charles was amused at the comedy. He had half a mind to give his victim a large Degas, of a woman whose face it is impossible to see: her head is bent, one sees its top, and her hair flowing down and being combed with a lifted and clumsy arm. But Mr. Capper had served him honestly. It would be a shame to give him anything at once so fine and so difficult. But there were two Manets, and one, of a beggar musician, Charles chose. Mr. Capper did know that Manet was really a painter. So far his knowledge carried him. But his sympathies were not aroused. The picture left him cold. Charles saw that. Some day or other he'd find out that it was a worth-while painting all right. Then he'd be surprised.

"I'm awfully sorry, Mr. Capper, but you'll have to help me out here. I can't ask this gentleman to change Messrs. Morgan's cheque. Besides, it's crossed. You'll have to go bail for me. They'll no doubt be willing to

send the painting to your office, and you can tell 'em I'm honest and that I can be trusted to pay for it. They'll send the bill to me in London."

Later, let me add, in the following week, when Charles was on the sea, Mr. Capper showed the picture to a few friends on whose judgment he placed some weight. They all thought his young friend might have been more generous. However, that his client should have given it him gave the broker in the mean time a great deal of satisfaction. He was quite sorry when the bugle sounded and he had to leave Charles on the steamer. As he did so, and as their hands parted, Charles leant forward and whispered in his ear: "I've another secret. It was n't really my birthday yesterday, you know: I'm more than twenty-one."

Charles sought his stateroom. He had left America. He was on his way back to the world, the life he knew. He'd visited New York; he'd done his best to do as Mr. Gorham had suggested — and he'd failed. He could n't pretend he'd done any work. He'd used his wits — a little — and that was all he could say. But that he'd done before — often, in Mount Street, in Paris, at Monte Carlo. It was n't enough. His one defence, if defence proved necessary, was that he'd been prepared to stop where he was. Events had moved rapidly, and he'd made a fortune; but it was n't altogether his fault. Chance had favoured him. Fortune, though, or no fortune, he'd been called back. Mr. Gorham wanted him, and he'd answered his summons. After all, they had n't given him much chance to work. And yet, if Mr. Davi-

son had taken him more seriously at that first interview, and had really tried to help, then perhaps in spite of his preoccupation on that morning with Michigan and Illinois, he'd never have gone into Wall Street. Things would be very different now in that case!

Back in his room Charles sat down on his bed. It would n't be worth while to unpack. He'd be moved directly, and if he did get out his things they'd only get in a muddle. He wished the purser would hurry up. They were outside the harbour now, and the boat was pitching a good deal in a head wind. Charles was a fair sailor, but still . . . After a while he lay down, covered himself with a rug, and went to sleep. When he awoke it was already dark. And it was nearly time for dinner. He felt better, and he got up and dressed. He did n't call this delay in telling him where his new room was exactly satisfactory management. It was a German boat.

Ready for dinner, he made his way down to the saloon. He'd been told to leave the question of his place at table. He sought the head steward, to whom the name of Caerleon did n't seem to mean much. He was given a card with the number of his place. It was near the foot of the long centre table. Soon his neighbours joined him. Charles was dismayed to find that they were all Germans, and all, as far as he could make out, drummers. They returned his bow and afterwards ignored him. Perhaps they did n't talk English. The meal passed without Charles uttering a word. He was still under the weather and wanted some soup and a wing of chicken, but to reach the latter course he had,

he found, by the rules of this German line, to wait through all the other courses. And each course was timed by a piece of music. It would begin, and the stewards would march in, carrying dishes. Charles supposed he'd have to stand it for six nights. But surely the special instructions for his comfort had n't yet filtered down to the dining-saloon. He'd no doubt be better off to-morrow, and with people who talked something else than the harsh gutturals of the Fatherland. It is n't a language, Charles said rudely to himself; it's a disease. His chicken finished, he bowed again to his neighbours and went at once to his room. He did n't feel well enough to seek the purser. Besides, he expected to find that while he had listened to Wagner and Brahms and Lehar his room had been changed. It had n't. He went to bed.

For a few minutes the next morning he lay half awake thinking that one day on the homeward journey was nearly over. This very week he'd see Alison. Then he thought he'd declare himself to the purser. Why be uncomfortable when all he had to do was to ask for something better? His stateroom was horribly small and crowded and stuffy, and the porthole could n't be opened because of the waves. Ringing for the steward, he sent a card to the purser requesting him to spare a minute or two of his time. An assistant came to him. The purser himself was sorry, but he could not leave his office. What could he do for Mr. Caerleon? Charles felt that something had gone awry.

"I asked if I could see the purser himself, because I understood before coming on board that I was to have

a better room, and that I was to be made rather more comfortable than I had at first expected."

The assistant had heard that tale before. He bowed, and said he would inquire. "Mr. Caerleon is the name, is it not?" He pronounced it Kay-er-leon.

Charles turned on his side and tried to go to sleep again. The more time he could spend in unconsciousness the quicker the days would pass. But he was soon aroused. This time the purser himself. A very high *ober*-purser (if that means nothing at all, blame Charles: it represents his attempt to reproduce in all its Teutonic dignity the greatness of the officer who now waited on him).

"I'm afraid, Mr. Caerleon, there's been a mistake — oh! a terrible mistake."

"What's happened? Surely the boat goes to Cherbourg? I'm not on the way round the Horn by any chance, am I?"

"Yes, the boat goes to Cherbourg." The purser did n't smile. The situation was far too serious. "They telephoned from the office the night before we sailed to say I was to take special care, as I thought, of Mr. Carline. There *is* a Mr. Carline on board. He's often sailed with us. He's a gentleman in the drug business. They said I was to see that he got a room and a bathroom on B deck, and a good chair, and a good place at table. He's got them. It 's the mistake of the clerk for not making the name clear. Now, what can I do? I can't very well turn him out of the stateroom he's been given. And I can't take his place at table away from him. If only I'd known before!" The poor man was genuinely concerned. As well he might be, thought Charles.

"And now? There is n't another empty room on the ship, except one or two much inferior to this, and there is n't a place at table to which I can alter you." The more he talked the more guttural, the more German he became.

"Well, it can't be helped," Charles said. "Anyway, I've got what I paid for — only I do wish my table companions talked something else than German."

A little later, as he walked up and down the deck, trying to work out from the previous twenty-four hours' run at what time they should get to Cherbourg, he heard his name called from one of the near-by chairs. Turning, he saw an old friend, an attaché at the British Embassy at Washington. He dropped into an empty place at his side.

"What have *you* been doing in America?" his friend asked.

Charles had to lie with readiness. "Oh, I went over for three days to do a little business. I only arrived last Wednesday. I'd intended to look you up if I'd stopped any longer."

"I saw your name on the list, but I could n't suppose it was you. I don't associate you with America, somehow. But where's your room? And where are you at table? I wish I'd known. We could have been together."

Charles told him about the room and the place that some other passenger had secured. His friend slapped his knee, and went off into a peal of laughter. "Oh, that *is* good! I shan't forget that in a hurry. We've been wondering why they put the dullest ass that ever

sailed up at our end of the table. Carline's his name, all right. He sits between me and von Donigsmark, and he's got absolutely nothing to say. Sugden — you know: one of those men who make millions a year packing meat — is opposite us. He's got the captain's suite, and last night we went up to his sitting-room to talk and play bridge. It's a sort of party we're to have every day — it'll be a haven of refuge. Sugden asked your namesake — he could n't help it exactly, as he was there right in the middle of us at every meal — and the man came up after dinner. He could n't play bridge, and he did n't know what we were talking about. Never in my life did I see a more absolute fish out of water." And he went off into laughter again.

Still, even one friend helped the voyage to pass. Charles's neighbours at table continued to behave as if English was a language they understood not at all. They talked across him and behind him and over him — but they ignored him. Of course he was an Englishman. The voyage was unconscionably dull, but it came to an end. And long as it seemed, even the run to Paris from Cherbourg could not last for ever. Charles reached the Chatham at half-past two on the morning of Friday. He had left it not three weeks ago. "I never expected to come back a millionaire," he said to himself; "I'll just have to be responsible now. Old Pyeman shall respect me at last!"

CHAPTER XVIII

IN WHICH THE AMIABLE CHARLES FINDS MR. GORHAM AND BEGINS TO UNRAVEL A VERY TANGLED SKEIN.

CHARLES had warned Miss Gorham of his arrival. He had telegraphed from Cherbourg that he'd call at the Meurice at ten o'clock — or earlier, if she sent for him. Otherwise, anything before ten would hardly be decent.

Miss Gorham did n't send for him, but she sent him a letter. He got it as he dressed.

DEAR MR. CAERLEON, — I can never thank you enough for your kindness to my father in coming back from New York at his wish. I want to warn you that he is very ill. He cannot talk to you. He cannot speak or even move. When he came back last week and read his letters and cables he was terribly upset; but he seemed to pull himself together, and I thought he'd soon be himself again. But almost at once another cable came, and after a little while he had a stroke. The doctors seem to have little hope. I will tell you more when I see you. Although he can't talk, he can understand — but he gets so easily tired. Your name was the last word he uttered. — Yours faithfully,

ALISON GORHAM.

Charles put the letter down, went to the window and threw it open. What did it mean? What news from

America? What news could have broken a warrior so redoubtable as Mr. Gorham had seemed? And Miss Gorham said "last week." Nothing had happened in America when he was there — and nothing had happened since. All important news had reached the Prinzessin Mathilde day by day.

Another knock at his door. Another letter. "A lady has just left this," the chasseur announced, and, interrogated, added that she had gone. The handwriting on the envelope was different from that of which he had been thinking. Alison's handwriting — which he'd just seen for the first time — was like its maker. Who else could know of his arrival? It was Mrs. Phillips: he might have guessed.

Dear Mr. Caerleon, — Please do not tell Miss Gorham I've written this to you. I'm leaving it at your hotel myself, to be sure you get it. I want only to say one thing. She is terribly overwrought. She is hardly mistress of herself, although she has borne up wonderfully since her father's illness began. I am afraid of a breakdown. She *will* do everything herself. Do all you can to find out what it is that Mr. Gorham wants of you — he wants something: he asked for you again and again — and then, if you can, grant his wish. I may not have the opportunity of talking to you. Please forgive the officiousness of

Constance Phillips.

What had happened? What could be the trouble behind these letters? What could Mr. Gorham, even Mr. Gorham so stricken, want of him? However, it was no

use to ask himself these questions. And it would n't do to answer Mrs. Phillips. Alison might see the letter and recognise his hand. If only the kind woman had waited after delivering the letter, that he might have talked to her and found what really had brought her friend down.

Ten o'clock struck as Charles gave his name to the Meurice porter. Alison came to him at once. "I have been waiting anxiously for you, Mr. Caerleon," and she gave him her hand so freely and with so open a welcome that his heart warmed. He looked hard at her. She had altered. Something was lost, but more had been gained. There had always been something a little too sensible about Alison, a little too self-reliant and contained. Her father had said that she spent his money, and that she did n't trouble herself or know how it was got. That, perhaps, had been the keynote of her character. It had come from ignorance of the world. She had been shielded from trouble. Things that harass and strengthen had been kept from her. Now she was in Paris almost alone, and for the first time she was learning that life was n't a fair for her amusement. And she had gained in beauty.

There was little Charles could say. "I was very happy, Miss Gorham, to come directly I heard that your father wanted me. You see, I never should have gone away. Please tell me. I know nothing save that your father is so ill — I only know what your letter told me."

"I don't know very much myself, Mr. Caerleon."

Charles could see that she was near to breaking down. Those black shadows beneath her eyes told of sleepless nights.

Alison continued: "When you went, Papa was still away, was n't he? We knew — you told me, I remember — that he'd been kidnapped so that he could n't go on with some business he was doing. Well, I think his enemies were even more successful than he'd feared. You know, he said he thought he'd be free in so many days. That, apparently, was the time it'd take them to get even with him and upset some plan of his. He was right. In the end he was simply told he could go. They did n't even make any secret of where he'd been kept. But all that does n't matter now. He came back to me and read at once his letters and cables. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. He sat there and opened one after another, hardly speaking to me. I watched him. They seemed to disturb him greatly; but, as you know, he was n't a man" — Charles noticed the past tense — "to show what he felt if he could help it."

"Did you know why he was disturbed, Miss Gorham?"

"No — but I learned. But wait. When he'd read all there was, he looked at me and smiled rather oddly. 'They've not left me much, my dear,' he said. Then he got up and walked into his own room and shut the door. I could hear him moving about. A few minutes later another cable came. It was the regular afternoon cable. I called out to him, and he came to the door and took it. I thought he looked terribly ill. You see, I'm explaining everything to you, Mr. Caerleon. Then I heard nothing at all for a minute or two, and then suddenly a fall. I knew it was Papa. He'd fallen in a heap in front of his writing-table. I thought he was dead. He did n't seem to breathe. I left him and ran

quickly to Constance, who's only four doors down the passage. She came, and then she telephoned to the office to send a doctor at once. We laid Papa on his bed and loosened his collar. I could see then that he was still alive. It was a French doctor. He said Papa'd had a stroke. Another doctor was sent for. And they were with him over an hour, while Constance and I sat in the other room. It was so, so awful. I shall never forget it."

"Did you look at the cable? Was it there still when you went in?"

"Yes. I have it upstairs. But I remember what it said. It was simply, 'Price now twenty-eight five-eighths.' I don't know what it means."

Charles did, of course. He realised that Mr. Gorham's speculations must have gone even more awry than the financier had anticipated. But he was n't allowed to carry his thoughts far.

"When the doctors came in they said I was to get a couple of nurses at once. I did n't: I only got one. I wanted to do as much for Papa myself as I could. The nurse looks after him all day; I stop with him at night. One of the doctors stayed all the evening — till midnight. He said Papa might come to himself a little — and he did, later in the evening. Oh, it was so dreadful! He lay there on the bed quite white; all his colour was gone. I was watching him, and his eyes opened and he looked at me. Then he whispered — for he could not speak out — 'Caerleon, I want Caerleon,' and a minute later he said the same words. After that — it is more than a week ago — he seemed to become unconscious;

perhaps he fell asleep. And since then he's been quite helpless. He can move his fingers a little, and his eyes and eyelids; but that is all. And he can understand what I say to him, but not, I think, what the others say. I told him you were coming directly I got your cable, and he seemed to have been made happier, more peaceful. He knows you are to be here at half-past ten — I told him that time that I might talk to you first." Alison broke off for a minute and looked at Charles. "But, Mr. Caerleon, I have n't thanked you for coming. I don't know whether you were in New York on business, but I am sure that I know no one else whom I could have relied on to come at my call as you did. I want you to know how grateful I am, how very grateful." Her voice quivered, and Charles took her hand. A hundred sentences came to his lips, but he said no one of them.

"Miss Gorham, I am very happy if I can be of any service to you; my voyage was nothing."

Alison rose. "Come," she said. "Let us go up. I'll go in first and tell Papa I've brought you. Speak to him clearly, and I think perhaps he'll understand you. I shall leave you with him. The doctor comes at twelve."

When a few minutes later Charles was called to Mr. Gorham's bedside, he was shocked at the spectacle the financier presented. When he'd seen him last he had been ruddy and well covered. Now he was white and emaciated. His hair too seemed to have dropped away. His head appeared a dead thing on the pillow. Its immobility terrified.

"I am sorry, Mr. Gorham, you should be so ill,"

Charles said, "but I am glad you sent for me." They were alone. "Your daughter tells me you can't speak yet, but that your eyes are all right. You must let me find out what you want by asking questions, and you can answer 'yes' or 'no' — by closing your eyes if it's 'no' you want. There is no hurry. I've all the time there is." Charles looked at Mr. Gorham: he fancied his eyes showed appreciation and intelligence, but he could not be sure. It was stupid not to have found out from Alison if there was any kind of code already in operation. But he must make sure that what he'd himself suggested would work.

"Do I tire you, Mr. Gorham? Now you know I'm here, would you rather I came back?"

The eyes in that still head closed.

"I am glad," said Charles; "and because I think that more talking than is necessary will tire you, I'm going to plunge straight into things. When I was here you told me your enemies in New York wanted to kidnap you so that they might defeat your stock exchange plans. They've succeeded, I take it?" The eyes did not move. "And in some way things are even worse than you expected they'd be? Yes. You risked your fortune in one deal, and it's gone awry? You learned how far wrong from the cables that waited you when you got back here, and specially from the last one that came just before you fell ill? You want me to read them that I may understand? Miss Gorham has them?" The eyes closed. "Then I must find them. They are in the pocket of the coat you were wearing? No? In one of the drawers of your writing-table? Yes."

Charles went to the table and opened the drawers one by one. Those at the top had been usurped by the nurse. One at the side contained a little pile of cables. Charles looked at the one on the top. It read: "Price now thirty and quarter." And those same words, but with a difference in the numerals, were in each of the cables beneath it, while those sent on the days immediately following the date of Mr. Gorham's disappearance had additional messages, commenting, mildly to begin with, and then with obvious dismay, on the fact that none of the usual replies had been forthcoming. At last their sender seemed to have lost heart. His remonstrances ceased; he returned to the bare announcement of the state of the market.

Charles looked up. "I've read all these, Mr. Gorham. It comes to this: you've lost your fortune, is n't that it? Practically all you have in the world?" The eyes did not move. "Then we must start from that. You know I hope soon to be your son-in-law, so you must consider me one of the family. To begin with, you must give me back my promise — you must let me choose my own time to ask your daughter." Still the eyes did not move. "That, then, is understood. But if you've lost your fortune, I've made one. Almost by accident I've made nearly seven million dollars since we parted. No, you think I'm talking nonsense, but I'm not. Here, see" — and Charles took out the Morgan cheque and held it before Mr. Gorham's eyes.

"I must explain. I had some money when I got to New York, and a friend told me that if I bought at a certain time a certain stock I'd make a lot. I did. It went

down and I was nearly cleared out, and then it bounded up and never ceased going up; I bought and bought more shares with my profits, and this is the result. It's all for Miss Gorham. Michigan and Ill—"

But Mr. Gorham had stirred, and his lips moved. Words came from his mouth, whispered words. "Go—call Allison—wait other room."

CHAPTER XIX

IN WHICH THE TANGLE IS UNRAVELLED AND THE AMIABLE CHARLES PARTS WITH FIVE MILLION DOLLARS AS IF IT WERE HALF A CROWN.

CHARLES was not to see Mr. Gorham again that morning. While he waited the doctor arrived, and after a while Alison came out to say that he was to go away and to come back, if he would, at three. In the hours that had to pass he thought over what Alison had told him and what he had managed to learn from Mr. Gorham himself. He felt he could reconstruct what had happened to Mr. Gorham with tolerable accuracy and in some detail. But, curiously, to two things which might have leapt to his intelligence he was blind.

Going back at the appointed hour, Charles found the doctor still with Mr. Gorham. He had lunched with Alison. There had been developments.

"Doctor Leduc says he cannot understand the sudden change that has come over Papa since he saw him yesterday. He must, he says, have had a great shock again. I tell him that's impossible. I don't think *you* can have given him any shock, Mr. Caerleon. But whatever it was, it has done him great good. You know he spoke some words this morning to you. They were his first for more than a week. And in other ways he's better. Doctor Leduc says it's wonderful — and he even

seems a little hopeful. Although, perhaps that's only my fancy. But here is Doctor Leduc. — This is the gentleman who was with Papa when he called for me this morning, doctor."

"Indeed! I am glad to see him. There are one or two questions I want to ask. Were you — I understand from Mademoiselle Gorham that you were — talking to Monsieur Gorham? Yes. Well, he asked for you just after he fell ill. Had you, may I ask, any business together?"

"Not exactly." The question was a little difficult to answer. "We had talked about business, and it happened that he'd explained to me something of what he was doing, and then I — well, I wanted him to do something for me; but that was n't business exactly."

Doctor Leduc's eyes twinkled; he looked shrewdly at Charles.

"Can you remember at what point in your conversation — or, it was n't conversation, since you must have done all the talking — Monsieur Gorham altered, and called for his daughter?"

Charles tried to remember, and succeeded. "I had told him of certain good fortune I'd had in America, had shown him a cheque for what I had made, and — yes, I remember — I'd just mentioned the name of the railway in which I'd been speculating and had made money. Why, it was at its name he moved first. I recall now that I did n't finish the words."

"Well, Mademoiselle Gorham and I have made it out that it has been some business anxiety that caused her

father's illness, and some great loss. You may depend on it, I think, that your railway had something to do with it. But go to him now. He's spoken once since I came, and then it was to say your name again. I told him I'd fetch you as soon as I could. Talk to him. It'll tire him, but that's better than his fretting. Find out more if you can."

Charles fancied that Mr. Gorham's eyes followed him with a greater alertness than in the morning. He took up the conversation where he'd left it.

"I was telling you, Mr. Gorham, of my good luck. I made my money buying Michigan and Illinois shares. You have something to do with that stock, have n't you?" And then, as he asked and as he watched for the possible closing of Mr. Gorham's eyes, illumination came. Michigan and Illinois — "Old Man Pyle"— the figures on the cable forms in the drawer there — the kidnapping: of course they were all connected. Michigan and Illinois was evidently the railway in which Mr. Gorham had been operating, of which he'd told him the night they'd dined together at Paillard's. Mr. Gorham had been put out of the way, — it had been made impossible for him to support the market, — and then the shares had been run down to a point at which even his large fortune had been swallowed up, and Mr. Pyle and his associates had started securing, or re-securing, control. That's where Charles had come in. He just happened into the market at the psychological moment. He'd helped run the price up, and his buying must have interfered even more than Mr. Capper had thought with the Pyle operations. Why, the money that Mr. Gor-

ham had lost he had made. It was all clear as daylight. But he must make sure.

"Mr. Gorham, I think I've got this thing right in my mind now. Close your eyes at once if I'm wrong in anything I say" — and he proceeded to tell the story of the last fortnight as he saw it. "Now, then, I'm beginning to understand, and I'm beginning to see a way in which I can be of use. You've lost more than you ever thought possible, Mr. Gorham? They've just cleaned you out, is n't that so? That last cable giving the price as twenty-eight five-eighths showed you you were done for for the present. But you have n't lost everything, have you? You've got something left?"

Mr. Gorham's lips shaped themselves to a "no"; perhaps he whispered the word.

"Nothing? But you have n't lost more than you've got? What do you call it? — you'll be able to meet your obligations?"

This time the "no" was unmistakeable.

"Then I must find out by how much you're short. I'll put it in dollars — I'm getting quite used to them! — and I'll jump a hundred thousand dollars at a time."

It was a tedious business. The end of it was that Mr. Gorham made clear that he was bound to fail, and that the extent of his deficit would be something over five million dollars. Then — and days later when he talked the matter over with Alison — he came to the certainty that it was n't the loss of his fortune that had brought Mr. Gorham down. That he could have stood. No, what had come as the one unbearable thing was that he'd lost more than he could pay, that he'd be bankrupt.

Not even of Alison had he been thinking, although he'd never provided for her. He was thinking not of her, but of the name of Gorham.

And Charles, who was n't a business man, who had been until the last few days a stranger to all the conventions of that business which was Mr. Gorham's life and soul, knew, as he stood by his bedside, exactly how the old man felt. It was Alison's father who was there. But how simple it'd be to put the matter right.

"Mr. Gorham, we can fix that. Your daughter knows what I don't know — the address of your office or representative in New York, and of your banker. I'm going out to her now. She'll send a cable to each. She'll say, in the briefest possible manner, that ten days ago you fell so ill that since then till to-day you've been unconscious, but that now you're better, and that because your account may want fortifying, — I know that's the word in England, and perhaps it's right in America too, — you are cabling five million dollars from London in the morning (my cheque's on London, you know), and that they're to cable if they want more." ("I hope to goodness they won't," he added to himself.)

A light seemed to come into the old man's eyes. His lips moved, but no words came. And then a fresh wonder. He moved his head a little, a very little. His fingers opened. Charles had the feeling that they were open for his. He placed his hand in the old man's and pressed it. . . .

He could add nothing. "I am going now," he said. "The cables will be sent at once. It's hardly morning

in New York. And then I shall speak to Miss Gorham — Alison."

The old man's hand responded. Charles left him.

Doctor Leduc had to be told of the change in his patient's condition. He went to him at once, and Charles had to explain to Alison the necessity of cabling. She was too tired, too weary to understand or question. Besides, she took it for granted that, if Charles was cabling that five million dollars were being sent, they were being sent by her father's instructions, and she supposed that Charles had to go to London to get them. She was grateful, but she did n't try to realise what it all meant. They wrote the cables together.

Going out, — for he would trust them to no one else, — Charles met Mrs. Phillips at the entrance of the hotel. He told her something of what had happened, and of Mr. Gorham's improvement, and he told her rather proudly that he'd been able, he thought, to find out what Mr. Gorham wanted and to do it for him.

"And now, Mrs. Phillips, since you've treated me with so much confidence, I want you to do something for me, and I want to return your confidence if you'll let me. I have to go to London to-night for Mr. Gorham. I shall come back by the eleven train to-morrow; but I shan't be here in the hotel till eight o'clock. I want to see Miss Gorham alone before I go. She tells me she has n't been out for days. The doctor is going to stop there, he said, for some hours. I shall be back in a few minutes: I'm just sending some cables. Won't you make Miss Gorham be ready to go out with me — if only for half an hour. We will walk in the Tuileries Gardens.

Please do that for me. You can. I need not tell you why I want it — I think you know."

Mrs. Phillips held out her hand. "Mr. Caerleon, I do know — and I'll do all I can; and I do wish you the happiness you want, indeed I do."

CHAPTER XX

HAPPY LOVE IN THE TUILERIES GARDENS

CHARLES found Alison waiting for him, dressed for a walk. "It is a good idea of yours, Mr. Caerleon. I'll be very glad to go out. It's the first time I've had the heart for it. But you've done Papa so much good. He looks so different. Doctor Leduc won't leave him; but he's delighted. Where shall we go? I can be out a whole hour."

Still a little of the winter sun shone on the leaping fountains of the Tuileries Gardens and on the wheeling pigeons of the cour du Louvre and gilded the roofs on the quai d'Orsay when Charles and Alison walked together alone for the first time of their friendship — the first time alone, save on that dark morning in February when they had walked down in search of aid from the rue Lepic to the place Pigalle. They spoke hardly at all. Charles was summoning his courage, saying to himself that he'd enjoy the first half-hour before he put his fate to the test, that perhaps he would do it when they got to that point there, or to that further on. Suddenly Alison turned to him.

"Mr. Caerleon, I feel you are a friend both of Papa's and of mine. I want to ask you a question. You need n't answer it if you don't want to, but if you do answer it, I'm sure you'll tell me the truth. You must forgive my being so odd and so curious, as you may think, — but it

is n't curiosity." She would n't have been able to explain what it was, poor girl, if it was n't curiosity; but then she had n't considered the implications of the question she had for Charles. Even if she had, she might have asked it. American girls don't beat about the bush.

"You may ask me any question you like, Miss Gorham, and I shall be very proud to answer it with absolute frankness."

"Mr. Caerleon, I want to know whether on that evening on which Mrs. Phillips and I saw you off to Monte Carlo you were alone?"

"I don't quite understand, Miss Gorham."

"I mean, did you travel to Monte Carlo by yourself?"

Surprise at the question made Charles's "No, I did n't" sound rather awkward. Alison's heart sank. But she was going to make sure that there was no mistake or misunderstanding when Charles interrupted her.

"I should have travelled by myself if it had n't chanced that I shared a compartment with a man I'd met some months before — a man called Bain. We struck up a friendship then, and continued it at Monte Carlo afterwards. But please tell me why you ask. Do you know him, by any chance?"

"No, Mr. Caerleon, I don't. But surely you had other friends on the train and at Monte Carlo?"

"I did n't see anyone else I knew on the train. At Monte Carlo I'd lots of friends, but I did my best to avoid them. I hardly spoke to a soul except Bain and one or two people he knew. But do please tell me, if you don't mind, the reason of your questions."

Alison felt she in turn had to be frank. "I asked because I saw in the train — and it was that that made me take Constance away without waiting for you to start — the same girl whom I had seen two or three nights before at the Abbaye de Thélème, and whom Papa and I knew you'd been talking to. I thought you'd arranged to meet her on that train, and I was angry, hurt if you like, that you should have allowed me to come to see you off in those circumstances."

"Thank you, Miss Gorham, for telling me. May I explain? I did n't see that girl in the train; I had no idea she was there." He was on the point of adding that he believed she'd got out at Marseilles, but he had enough sense to stop the words in time. "I don't think she was at Monte Carlo. As for what happened at the Abbaye, it was an accident"; and very briefly he told Alison what had occurred on that evening, adding, "I did n't and don't even know her name, to say nothing of her address."

Another, an older, woman might have asked him if he had seen the girl since. Luckily Alison did n't. Charles was relieved. He had experience enough to know that that way danger lay, and an even greater misunderstanding. And he had, in effect, nothing to conceal. The more need to conceal it, wisdom told him. But how he hated having to conceal anything. Poor yellow head! So good, so harmless, and destined for so much trouble. Alison looked frankly at him. "I'm glad — and you'll forgive me." For a little while they walked in silence.

"Miss Gorham, is it too cold for us to sit down for

a minute or two? I too have something I want to ask you." They had walked to and fro, and were now near the round pond on which the little Parisians sail their little boats. They found unoccupied chairs under the statue of Diana.

Charles turned and looked at his companion. Alison, stirring uneasily, quivered as if the night were cold.

"Miss Gorham, I have something to ask you. You must answer me as frankly as I answered you. Won't you take the right to ask me questions for all your life? I love you — I have loved you ever since I saw you come into the Café de Paris three weeks ago. All, all my thoughts have been for you. Can you care for me?"

Alison had turned away her face. She was looking at the ground, at the little hole she was digging in the gravel with the tip of her umbrella. A minute passed.

"Alison . . . " Charles knew no more to say.

And then slowly her right hand, a shy brown mouse of a hand, came from the muff that lay on her lap and held itself open for his.

But even before he could take it she had drawn it away. Now she turned her face towards him. He could see that she had been crying. Tears were still in her eyes. But they were happy tears.

"No, dear," she said. "I do not want to give you my hand gloved. It is too much yours for that." Her glove was off by now, and her fingers answered to his.

CHAPTER XXI

A CLEARING UP

I HAVE known odd people, financiers, bankers, men who were in the habit of dealing with large sums, who have been terrified at the fact that they have had at some unusual moment to carry money, real money, in their pockets — a few hundred pounds, I mean. They seem to imagine that the lynx-eyed criminal detects its presence, and they've told me they've bolted along Threadneedle Street, run into the Tube, have tried to sit by themselves in the carriage, and have n't breathed till the burden has been handed over. In America, where every man carries a roll — if he can afford to — such fear does n't exist, I suppose.

In this matter Charles had the American habit. The truth was that he had n't a nervous mind, and yet it did occur to him the next morning when he let himself in to his lonely flat at half-past six and cleared his pockets prior to taking a bath and changing his clothes, that he might well have been worried at carrying about Messrs. Morgan and Company's cheque for over a million. There was no need now, however, to fret about that. It was there safe enough in his letter-case. Of course it might have been stolen, but it had n't been. And even if it had, he supposed the thief would n't have been able to do anything with it: he had done his best to render it unnegotiable.

Once more he had to hustle. Alison and he the previous evening had gone back to the hotel from the Tuileries Gardens, and he'd left her at the door. He was to return to Paris on the eleven-o'clock train, and to dine with her that evening — with her and Mrs. Phillips; and what had happened between them was to be no secret. In the mean time banks open at nine o'clock; the eleven train goes from Victoria — a good long way away from the Strand. The operation of clearing a cheque for such a sum and arranging for the cabling of a million pounds was likely to make a big hole in a couple of hours. But Charles caught his train.

At the Meurice at eight o'clock he learned that Mr. Gorham was much better. Charles alone had the key to the reason. He saw no necessity for giving it either to Alison or to her friend. Indeed, not yet — if ever — did he realise what he had done. He'd given away — pitched away, some of his friends would tell him if they knew, which they never would — a million pounds. For a moment, let me confess, he wondered whether he'd bought Mr. Gorham's acquiescence in his suit with this timely assistance. His good sense told him better. Mr. Gorham had asked for his return from America, he felt sure, just because, believing himself to be stricken fatally, he wanted Charles to win, and to shield, his daughter. He had n't known, he could n't have suspected, Charles's changed fortunes. And after all, what was the million? It was that two hundred pounds that he'd taken to Monte Carlo three weeks ago. And he had still more money lying at his bank than he had ever imagined himself having, more than he could use. But

again, Mr. Gorham's reverses would, it was likely, require more financing: he'd said he was more than five million dollars short. Perhaps, after all, not so much would be left when all the old man's anxieties were cleared away.

Not that evening was Charles to see Mr. Gorham. The old man had been better, and he'd looked easier all day. He had even spoken a few words to Alison. Now he was sleeping. The nurse was with him. He would get back his speech, Doctor Leduc said, and he would get back some command of his limbs, but always he would be a cripple; he would never be able to walk. "His recovery is marvellous. Never have I known such a case. I would have sworn that he would never speak again."

The dinner was a happy one — oh, how much happier than that other they had taken, all three together, at the same table on the day Mr. Gorham disappeared! Mrs. Phillips had ordered some white roses for the occasion, and one of them Alison extracted and gave to Charles for his button-hole. "My first gift to you, dear," she said. It was a moment of joy. Under cover of the table he seized her hand, and when she withdrew it for its proper work her finger sparkled with the ring he had made time to get her in London. Mrs. Phillips was almost as happy as they were themselves. They were three children, and perhaps they did not think very much of the old man upstairs. He would not have had it otherwise.

In the morning the cable that Charles feared arrived. He did n't have the anxiety of opening it himself. It had come addressed to Alison, and, having opened it, she

sent it on to Charles with a brief note saying that as he was arranging her father's affairs, she'd better let him have it. And her father was better. And would he come as soon as ever he could. And would he — please — take her out to lunch. "We have, dear, so much to talk of." Then the cable. It amounted to a plain statement that the five million dollars was insufficient to cover Mr. Gorham's liabilities by another million and a half; it might be less; luckily it was certain that it could n't be more. Charles attended to the message at once. He'd remained a business man. Anticipating this call, he'd arranged a code with Messrs. Coutts, and he was able to telegraph to them to cable the money in order that it might be in New York when the day began. "I can tell Mr. Gorham directly, and then he and I can forget Michigan and Illinois." He had no regrets. That huge sum had come in such a way that he had never realised its existence, had never handled it even in his imagination. Besides, even when one other deduction was made, there'd be enough left to buy a house and furnish it, and perhaps even to invest something against that future that young lovers contemplate with so little care.

And that other deduction? It was bound up with the one preoccupation that had never left Charles for more than an hour since the moment he had failed to find his little French friend at the Hôtel Frontenac. Something, something he must do for her. He must find her — now, or later. At the moment, perhaps, she was prosperous, happy in her way. But how long would such happiness last? How long, indeed? Health goes, and youth. But how could he shield her? He could not, indeed, be sure

of finding her. That he must do before it was too late. Already he had tried — in vain. From the Meurice over night he had gone — a strange errand, he knew, to follow after such a dinner — to the Abbaye. Perhaps she might be there. But no. Neither Albert nor his lieutenant knew her from his description. Charles was persistent. He'd insisted on seeing whether on that evening when he and the Gorhams had supped together, a table had not been reserved in some name which would enable her to be identified and traced. It was fruitless. And he had spent uselessly several louis in following up certain clues gained from the list of the Provence passengers, who had sailed to and from New York when she had sailed. Certainly the name of Finot did n't appear anywhere.

Still, it could only be a question of time. So Charles now set to work to make provision against the moment when they should meet. He had discovered that to buy for a girl of say twenty-four an annuity of twenty-five thousand francs would cost twenty-two thousand pounds. That sum now he put aside. In a few weeks he would have a search made for her. Perhaps he would advertise. He would take advice. It would, he supposed, be necessary that he should see her once — once only. He would tell her of the provision he had made for her; he would thank her; that would be all.

And soon he would tell Alison.

CHAPTER XXII

IN WHICH THE AMIABLE CHARLES IS TOLD TO FORGET RESTAURANTS, TRAVEL, NEW YORK, PARIS — AND APPARENTLY SUCCEEDS

WHAT more is there to add? Very little. Extricated from his difficulties, Mr. Gorham recovered rapidly — to a point. But his place was a long chair, and he who had been so vigorous did everything with the aid of a nurse. Always he was grateful to Charles, but he yielded to his wish that Alison should n't know how his recovery had been brought about. He talked little, and that with difficulty. "I want," he said, "to rest. No, I won't go back to America. Alison shall go when she will, but she shall go without me. There I was a master; I won't go back a cripple, to be pointed out as the man who was Cyrus K. Gorham."

But Alison had no wish either to go back to Philadelphia — for the present, at least — or to leave her father. "You will let him live with us," she said to Charles. "Perhaps, dear, he won't be here so very long. Cannot we go and live in the country? Cannot we have a small house by the sea, and a garden, and a boat? Let us forget New York and Paris, restaurants, travel. Let us be quiet."

And Charles was content. When all his own debts had been paid, he had, as he had hoped, money for a house

— and to spare; and he had another nine hundred a year to add to his income. Partly for old sake's sake, partly because he was able to satisfy himself that it was a perfectly sound security, and in spite of his determination to forget Michigan and Illinois, he'd invested what capital all his deductions had left him in the first bonds of that railroad. They gave a good return.

Their house was at Helford — on the Helford River — a cottage with its rose-filled garden running down to the river. He had had it modernised. An American architect had done it — with reverence, and success. Among the other things that Charles had brought back from New York was a determination to employ an American architect if ever he built a house, and a determination that that architect should provide a bathroom for each chief bedroom. It cost a deuce of a lot, but he was very proud of the result! Also he did carry out his determination to have the "New York American" every day. Alison sniffed at it and laughed at him; Mr. Gorham refused to look at it — and read it regularly in secret.

It was a day in June. Charles had ridden into Falmouth and had come back rather earlier than had been expected. Mr. Gorham had been wheeled out into the little terrace, and there in the shade, amid clambering mesembryanthemums, Charles found him reading the despised sheet.

"I've caught you, sir."

"It was a name on the page that attracted me," Mr. Gorham replied, "or I would n't have touched the paper.

Do you remember Mr. Rolker and his Italian prince son-in-law? Well, the young man won't live in America any more. He's bringing suit against his wife because she declares in her turn that she won't live in Italy. I said that night at Paillard's that Rolker was a fool. I've done better than Rolker, my boy; but" — and his eyes twinkled — "I said the same evening that I did n't think you could ever do any real work; and I was right in that, too!"

It was the longest speech Mr. Gorham had made. Charles turned to Alison, who came at that moment to welcome him, put his arm about her shoulders, and laughed.

"Dear father-in-law, you did n't make many mistakes: perhaps you were right about me; I daresay you had reason. But I have Alison."

THE END

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